No. 158 SEPT. 18, 1915 5 CENTS

Nick Carter Stories

THE BLUE VEIL
or Nick Carter's Torn Trail

NICK CARTER STORIES

Issued Weekly. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., New York.*
Copyright, 1915, by STREET & SMITH. *C. G. Smith and G. C. Smith, Proprietors.*

Terms to NICK CARTER STORIES Mail Subscribers.
(Postage Free.)
Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months	65c.	One year	$2.50
4 months	85c.	2 copies one year	4.00
6 months	$1.25	1 copy two years	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

No. 158. NEW YORK, September 18, 1915. Price Five Cents.

THE BLUE VEIL;

Or, NICK CARTER'S TORN TRAIL.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

REMARKABLE TRICKERY.

Nick Carter listened without interrupting.

The man addressing the famous detective was not one to be wisely interrupted. His strong face, his broad, thin-lipped mouth and square jaw, the glint of his steel-blue eyes, his portly and imposing figure—all denoted that he was the type of man that insists upon having his way, his inning at the bat, as it were, but who then would graciously accord the same privilege to another.

"The danger, Mr. Carter, cannot be overestimated," he was forcibly saying. "It really is very terrible. We are living in constant peril. That man is a perpetual menace. Unless he can be wiped out of existence, or put behind prison bars, there is no telling what he might accomplish, no possible way to anticipate it and guard against it. I cannot for the life of me understand how he got by a detective as marvelously keen and discerning as you. I cannot, Carter, on my word."

Nick smiled and knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"It is not very difficult to understand," he replied, with patience unruffled. "There were two reasons for it, Mr. Langham."

"Two reasons?"

"Yes. One, because the likeness between Chester Clayton and David Margate, or Doctor David Guelpa, in which character this exceedingly clever rascal then was posing, is a most extraordinary one. I doubt that two other persons could be found, not excluding the most perfect of twins, who look so precisely alike."

"But you already knew of that extraordinary resemblance, Mr. Carter, when Margate eluded you and made his escape."

"Very true," Nick admitted. "But there were other facts which I did not know, and which I had had no way of learning. That is why there was a second reason for Margate's escape. Any detective, even one as keen and discerning as myself, if I may quote you, would be deceived by a seeming impossibility."

"Impossibility?"

"Seeming impossibility," corrected Nick.

"What do you mean?"

"Bear in mind, Mr. Langham, that Margate rushed from the house in which we secured his confederates and ran to his suite in the Hotel Westgate, of which Clayton still is manager."

"I know about that."

"I then did not know that a secret electric communication existed between the very room in which we made the arrest and the apartments to which Margate had gone, nor that a signal informing him of the arrest and warning him to flee could be communicated to him by stepping on a concealed button under the carpet. I since have learned all about that. That was done by Scoville, one of the arrested crooks, unknown to me and my assistants."

"But, Mr. Carter——"

"One moment, please," Nick now interrupted. "I want you to see how impossible Margate's exploit must have appeared."

"Go on, then."

"Only ten minutes elapsed from the time Margate left his confederates, until I entered the Westgate in pursuit of him. The first person I saw in the hotel office was, I supposed, Manager Clayton."

"Well?"

"How could I believe anything else?" Nick went on more earnestly. "He was in the office inclosure and wearing an entirely different suit from what Margate was wearing ten minutes before. Ten minutes is an incredibly short time in which to have covered the distance between the two houses, to have gone to his suite and changed his outside garments and got down to the hotel office."

"I admit that, Carter, of course."

"I called to the supposed Clayton, therefore, and we went up to Margate's suite, in company with my junior assistant, Patsy Garvan," continued Nick. "We found the supposed Margate unconscious on his bed, clad in the same suit in which I had seen him, as I have said, only ten minutes before. Who on earth would have suspected, despite the extraordinary resemblance and all that previously had occurred, that such a lightninglike change of character could be accomplished; that the man on the bed was Clayton, and the man at my elbow was the crook himself? It would have seemed incredible, utterly impossible. That is why I did not give it a thought."

"How was it accomplished, Mr. Carter?"

"I since have learned, of course," said Nick. "Margate received the warning signal the moment he entered his suite. He instantly telephoned down to the hotel office and requested Clayton to come up there immediately on important business."

"He did so?"

"Certainly. Clayton had no occasion to suspect Margate, whom he knew only as Doctor Guelpa. He complied, of course, and Margate invited him to his suite. Then, passing back of him, he threw one arm around his head and over his mouth, at the same time injecting into his neck a quantity of the same swiftly acting drug with which he had overcome Patsy Garvan earlier in the evening."

"Clayton has told me about that."

"It was done in a couple of minutes," Nick went on. "Margate then stripped Clayton of his outside garments, exchanging them for his own, and placed his senseless form on the bed."

"But what motive had he?" questioned Langham. "Why did he not flee at once after receiving the warning?"

Nick laughed a bit derisively.

"You don't know this rascal, Mr. Langham," he replied. "I now know more about him than I then did. He turned that trick only because he was short of funds. He then went down to the hotel office, a human counterfeit of Clayton, with the intention of stealing the money from the hotel vault."

"Ah, I see," Mr. Langham nodded. "A rascal, Carter, indeed."

"My timely arrival with Patsy at just that moment prevented his design," said the detective. "He had no sane alternative, when I called to him, but to accompany us to the suite. My assistant then made a hurried examination of the man on the bed, and he at once inferred that Margate had committed suicide."

"I suppose it appeared so," Mr. Langham allowed.

"In the meantime," Nick added; "the supposed Clayton cried that he must telephone the good news to his mother and to Mademoiselle Falloni, whose stolen jewels we had just recovered. He hurried from the room, as if to do so. We now know that he hurried from the house, and that is the last we saw of him. But the whole business from beginning to end occurred in less than fifteen minutes, Mr. Langham, and no detective on earth, unless gifted with clairvoyance, would have suspected the trick."

"I admit, of course, that it would have seemed impossible," bowed Langham.

"Now, sir, let me tell you what I since have learned about this crook," said Nick. "I have looked up his record abroad. He twice had been convicted and sent to prison. He at one time was associated in Paris with the notorious Doctor Leon Deverge, who was executed two years ago for wholesale murder by means of drugs and poisons, of which he had made so profound a study that he knew much more of their subtle and deadly qualities than has been learned by any of his contemporaries."

"I remember having read of the man."

"This notorious physician and chemist imparted to David Margate much of his dangerous knowledge, and the career of the latter has always been one of vice and crime. It has been accomplished with such exceeding craft and cunning, moreover, that he most of the time has completely baffled the police. I admit that Margate is a terrible menace to society and to——"

"To us, Mr. Carter, in particular," said Mr. Langham, interrupting. "For he threatened Clayton by letter many months ago that he would wreak vengeance upon him for having put you on his track, and that your life would be the price for having foiled him and imprisoned his confederates. In view of all this, Carter, and particularly his extraordinary likeness to Clayton, his very existence is a constant menace."

"Those are the only reasons, Mr. Langham, why I consented to drive up here into the Berkshire Hills with my assistants to attend these festivities," Nick again interposed.

"That was very good of you, Mr. Carter, to be sure," bowed the other.

"I was pleased, of course, to be present at the marriage of Clayton and your daughter, and both assured me that they would feel easier if I was here," Nick added. "Clayton apprehended that Margate, despite that he has not been seen or heard from save once since his jewel robbery, might attempt knavery at this time. I attribute that, however, to Clayton's somewhat nervous temperament. I don't take very much stock in the threats of crooks, you know, for I long have been accustomed to them. Very few of them ever make good. I doubt that David Margate ever will."

"Well, I hope not, I'm sure."

"It is nearly time, I think, for Clayton and his bride to depart," Nick now said, glancing at his watch. "You will wish to see them leave, I suppose."

It then was ten o'clock in the evening, that of a bright day in June—a fit day, indeed, for the marriage of as beautiful a girl as charming Clara Langham, the only daughter of the multimillionaire president of the Century Trust Company, with whom Nick Carter had been talking.

More than six months had passed since the extraordinary case they had been discussing, that involving the theft and recovery of the world-famous jewels of Mademoiselle Falloni, the celebrated prima donna, a case resulting also in the arrest and conviction of all of the crooks save their ringleader, whose unparalleled elusion of Nick Carter at the last moment they had been reviewing.

Nick never had confided, not even to his trusty assistants, the terrible secret intrusted to his keeping by Clayton's cultured and attractive mother; that his extraordinary personal resemblance to the notorious crook was due to his twin relationship; that he bore his mother's maiden

name, and David Margate that of the criminal father of both, who had deserted his wife in England while the children were infants, taking with him this son, who afterward fell naturally into the evil footsteps of his vicious father, who since had died under sentence in a German prison.

Nick would not have thought of betraying such a secret, of which Clayton was entirely ignorant, and the disclosure of which would serve only to mar his happiness and in a measure wreck his subsequent life.

The secret then was known, in fact, only by Nick and the sad-hearted mother, Mrs. Julia Clayton, who had confided it to him only in order that the detective might prove Clayton innocent of the great jewel robbery mentioned. It was a secret that could be safely trusted to a man of Nick Carter's sterling integrity.

The room in which he then was seated was the private library of Mr. Gustavus Langham, in the money magnate's great stone mansion, occupied only as a summer residence. It had been built several years before at an enormous expense, before the death of his gay and fashionable wife.

It was like an old feudal castle, with its massive walls and parapets, its broad halls and winding stairways, its stately rooms and attractive surroundings, covering a vast wooded estate in one of the most picturesque and secluded sections of the beautiful Berkshire Hills.

From the room in which Nick was seated could be heard, though the door was closed, the strains of the orchestral music, also the vivacious conversation and gay laughter of a multitude of guests, gathered at the wedding reception by a special train from New York, or with motor cars from select summer colonies from a radius of fifty miles.

The driveways and roads through the vast estate of nearly a square mile were alive with moving conveyances of one kind or another, some of the guests residing at a distance already having made their departure.

For the wedding ceremony had been performed two hours before, the reception was nearing its end, and the bride and groom were making final preparations for a precipitous departure to avoid the customary good-luck shower on such occasions.

Mr. Langham also drew out his watch and glanced at it.

"Nearly ten," he remarked, replying to the detective. "Why, yes, I certainly wish to see them leave. I also want a last word in private with Clara. I will go and see her before she leaves her room. I told her I would do so about this time. She is expecting me, no doubt, and——"

But Mr. Langham, who had arisen while speaking, got no further with his remarks.

He was interrupted by the unceremonious opening of the door and by the hurried entrance of Clayton's best man, George Vandyke, a New York lawyer with whom Nick Carter was very well acquainted.

One glance at the young man's white face and dilated eyes was enough to convince the detective that something both alarming and extraordinary had occurred.

"Out with it, Vandyke," he exclaimed, starting up and dropping his cigar into the cuspidor. "What's the matter with you? What has happened?"

CHAPTER II.

THE STOLEN BRIDE.

Nick Carter evidently was the man George Vandyke was seeking. He appeared unable to speak for a moment, nevertheless, so great was his suppressed excitement.

"I've been looking for you," he finally gasped, when Nick seized him by the arm and shook him. "They told me you were here. I——"

"Out with it!" repeated Nick more sharply. "What's the trouble?"

"Clayton has disappeared," choked Vandyke. "He cannot be found. His bride also is missing. Neither of them are in their rooms, nor——"

"Good God! Has the blow fallen?"

Mr. Langham staggered as if he had, indeed, received a brutal blow.

Nick Carter immediately took the ribbons.

"Don't create a stir!" he commanded quickly. "Leave me to look into the matter. Since both are missing, they may have departed together, bent upon eluding their very zealous friends and a deluge of confetti."

"That cannot be, Nick," Vandyke hurriedly protested. "Clayton's suit case is still in his room. He would have taken it with him, of course, if he——"

"Leave it to me. Don't alarm the guests needlessly."

"But some of them already know——"

Nick did not wait for more. He brushed by the two men, and, outwardly perfectly calm, hastened through the crowded hall toward the main stairway.

Both Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan then were on the main floor of the vast house, the former near the open front door, where, both in the hall and on the granite steps and the broad veranda outside, scores of guests had gathered to speed the happy couple on their wedding journey.

Chick saw Nick approaching and caught the ominous gleam in his expressive eyes.

"What's up?" he asked quietly, hastily meeting him.

Nick now said what he really thought.

"That devil has got in his work again."

"Not Margate?"

"I fear so. Both bride and groom are missing."

"The deuce you say!"

"Nothing could have been pulled off, however, under the eyes of this mob on the steps and veranda. Slip around to the side door and see what you can learn," Nick hurriedly directed. "Keep your eyes open and nail any one acting suspiciously. Get word to Patsy and send him to the rear door. The trick may not have been turned yet. They can have been missing only a few minutes."

"I'm wise," Chick nodded, starting for the side hall and the broad exit under the massive porte-cochère.

Nick hastened to the second floor and toward the two rear rooms used by the bride and groom that evening, those in front having been needed to accommodate the throng of guests.

Nick discovered a solitary bridesmaid near the door of Clara's room, and somewhat apart from the group of women then near the stairs. She happened to be one with whom he was acquainted, and he hurriedly approached her.

"What's this I hear, Miss Arden?" he said quietly. "What do you know about it?"

"Little enough, Mr. Carter," she replied, pale and mystified. "I only know that Clara sent us all from her room after she was dressed for her journey. She explained that her father wanted to see her privately before she left, and that she was momentarily expecting him. We left her alone, therefore, and went downstairs."

"You mean yourself and the other bridesmaids?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long ago was that?"

"Not more than ten minutes; hardly as long, I think."

"Who discovered her absence?"

"I did. I returned to get my handkerchief, which I had left in the room. I found the room deserted. Clara had gone, but her suit case and hand bag still are there. I came out, of course, and I at once saw Mr. Vandyke coming up the side stairs. I told him about it, Mr. Carter, and he said that Clara probably was with Mr. Clayton in his room. He knocked, but received no answer. He then went in and found that Mr. Clayton also was missing."

"Did you make any inquiries among the guests here in the hall?"

"Yes, immediately. We could find no one who had seen either of them go out. Strange though it seems, both of them have mysteriously disappeared, leaving their luggage in their rooms."

"You say that Miss Langham, or, rather, Mrs. Clayton, was clad in her outside garments?"

"Yes, sir. She had on her hat, veil, and jacket, and was ready to leave at any moment."

"What is her traveling costume?"

"A navy-blue suit with hat and veil to match."

"Who, now, is in her room?"

"No one, Mr. Carter. She——"

"Wait!" Nick interrupted. "I will look in there."

He stepped into the room while speaking. It was in considerable disorder after the change of attire from a wedding gown to a traveling costume. There was no sign of the missing girl, no written line explaining her sudden departure, no evidence of when, why, or how she had gone. Both windows were open, but in each there was a wire screen secured on the inside. Nick saw plainly that neither of them had been tampered with.

"By Jove, this looks bad enough. It looks, indeed, as if Dave Margate has again got in his work," he said to himself while retracing his steps. "Has the rascal designs upon this girl, disregarding the valuable gifts now in the house? Those were safely guarded from every side, but who would have thought it necessary to guard her in such a throng as this?"

"What do you think about it, Mr. Carter?" questioned Miss Arden, awed by the more serious expression on the detective's face when he came from the room.

"I cannot say at present," Nick replied. "Don't be alarmed, nor spread the news too quickly. There still is a possibility that they will return."

He did not wait for an answer, but hastened into an opposite room, that occupied by Chester Clayton.

There Nick found, at first, the same negative conditions. A single window overlooked the rear grounds. It was closed and locked. Clayton's suit case stood near the door. His overcoat and hat were missing, however, though a pair of new kid gloves lay on the dressing stand.

Nick had only time to note these features of the scene when Vandyke hurriedly entered, looking even more pale and disturbed.

"Why did you apprehend so quickly that something was wrong?" Nick asked a bit abruptly, turning to him.

"Only because Clayton appeared to fear some mishap," Vandyke replied. "He admitted he had no definite reason for it, but he seemed very nervous."

"Where were you when he left? You were his best man."

"True. I came here to tell you about that."

"About what?"

"One of the caterer's assistants came in here a short time ago, not more than twenty minutes, and stated that Mr. Lenaire wanted to see me in the dining room."

"Lenaire is the caterer?"

"Yes. It was upon my recommendation that he was given this job. I asked Clayton if he had any immediate use for me, and he told me to go ahead and see what Lenaire wanted. I did so and found him in the dining room."

"What did he want?"

"He wanted to thank me again for having recommended him, and also to ask me to express his gratitude to Clayton for having seconded my suggestion, which he feared he would not have an opportunity to do personally before Clayton departed. He explained at some length, Nick, and when I returned I found that Clayton was missing. Then, when unable to find Clara, I feared something was wrong."

"I see," Nick nodded. "Did the waiter who came up return to the dining room with you?"

"No, not with me," said Vandyke. "I hurried down ahead of him. I did not see him again."

"Do you know his name?"

"I think Lenaire called him Toulon."

"By Jove, I think I scent the rat in the meal," Nick muttered. "Have you looked in the closet, Vandyke?"

"Not yet. Who would expect to find Clayton in the closet, or concealed in any part of the room? It would be absurd to suppose anything of the kind——"

"Not absurd to me," Nick suddenly interrupted. "See for yourself."

He had, while Vandyke was speaking, looked hurriedly into the wardrobe closet and under the bed. A broad, old-fashioned couch near one of the walls then claimed his attention. It was draped with a valance, which he quickly raised, and then he found what he was seeking.

Flat on his back under the couch lay the senseless form of Chester Clayton, his eyes closed and his white face upturned, as ghastly as if the hand of death had been laid upon him.

Vandyke recoiled with a shudder.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Is he dead? Is he dead, Mr. Carter?"

"Quiet," Nick cautioned. "No, not dead. The rascal who did this job doesn't thrust his knavish neck into a noose. Clayton has been drugged. It's the work of the same miscreant who downed him at the time of the jewel robbery."

"David Margate?"

"Yes."

"What shall we——"

"Don't stop to question," Nick interrupted. "Lend me a hand and we will place him on the couch. Slip out and

find a physician, if there is one among the guests. Don't alarm them, however, by stating what has occurred. A physician soon can revive him. Send Mr. Langham in here, but not a word about this to Mrs. Julia Clayton. Leave me to inform her."

"You think——"

"Never mind what I think," Nick again cut in while they placed the senseless man on the couch. "Do what I have directed."

"But Clara, his wife—what of her?"

"There's nothing to it, Vandyke," said the detective. "It's as plain as twice two. The bride has been stolen."

CHAPTER III.

THE ASSAULTED WAITER.

Chick Carter, hastening to follow Nick's instructions, found nothing in the side hall nor out-of-doors that shed any light on the mystery.

Several guests were departing in a limousine from under the porte-cochère, but Chick knew two of them personally and that none was worthy of the slightest suspicion.

Returning through the hall, he found Patsy Garvan and quickly told him what had occurred, while both hastened out of the rear door of the house. As they were descending the steps, one of the kitchen servants, who was on her way in, approached them and said somewhat excitedly, addressing Chick:

"Sure, sir, there's something wrong around here. Would you mind telling Mr. Langham, sir?"

"Something wrong?" questioned Chick, sharply regarding her. "Where? What do you mean?"

"Round here, sir," she replied, leading the way. "I was after taking out some refuse for the barrels, sir, and I heard moaninglike, as if some one was hurted."

"Heard it where?"

"Here, sir, under the cellar door. I was after—there 'tis again, sir!"

The corpulent Irishwoman shrank back affrighted.

A hollow, half-choked moan had issued from under a slanting bulkhead door abutting the foundation wall on that side of the house.

It was the opposite side from that on which was located the driveway making around from the front of the vast stone mansion and leading out to the stable and garage. Aside from the bulkhead door leading down to the basement there was only another door opening upon an entry and stairway for the use of the servants.

The adjoining grounds in that locality were deserted, and lighted only by the stars glittering in the purple sky. A path led across a strip of lawn to several outbuildings. Beyond this were the trees of the park and woodland covering the vast estate. Through the gloom beneath them some fifty yards away could be faintly seen a gray gravel driveway making off to the east.

Patsy caught sight of something white on the ground, just as the hollow moan interrupted the woman, and he stopped to pick it up.

It was a partly burned cigarette, yet from which only a few puffs had been taken.

Instinctively Patsy slipped it into his pocket, just as Chick exclaimed:

"By Jove, the woman is right. Lend me a hand, Patsy. This door is not locked. Here's a man on the stone steps."

His words evoked another moan from the prostrate man.

"Wait a bit!" said Patsy. "Here is my searchlight."

Chick had opened both sections of the slanting door, and Patsy now sent a beam of light down the several stone steps. In the area below, against an inner door of the cellar, lay a man in evening dress, bound hand and foot with stout cords and brutally gagged.

"Gee whiz!" cried Patsy. "Something wrong, Chick, is right."

"Help me lift him out."

"Lord save him!" said the woman, crossing herself. "Is he dead, sir?"

"Far from it," said Chick. "Dead men don't moan. He'll be all right when he can breathe freely. Now, sir, speak for yourself. How came you in this mess?"

The two detectives had placed him on the greensward outside of the bulkhead door, and Chick had quickly cut his bonds and removed the gag from his mouth.

The man choked and gasped convulsively for a moment, then explained with an effort that he was Pierre Toulon, employed as a waiter by Mr. Jean Lenaire, the French caterer; that he had stolen out a short time before to smoke a cigarette, and that he had been suddenly assaulted by three masked men, who had bound and gagged him, and then confined him under the bulkhead door.

Chick did not wait to look more deeply into the man's story, but turned to Patsy and said hurriedly:

"Go tell the chief. You'll find him on the second floor, probably in Clayton's room. I will help Toulon into the house. Nick will question him later."

Patsy hurried away without replying.

He found Nick, Mr. Langham, and two physicians in Clayton's room. The latter had begun to revive from the effects of the drug. He already could talk intelligently, and in a vague way could recall and state what had occurred.

It appeared, Nick already had learned, that the same waiter who had called Vandyke from the room, or a man so closely resembling him that Clayton detected no difference, returned almost immediately after Vandyke departed, saying that he missed his cuff link and thought it might have dropped on the floor.

Clayton naturally had bowed to look for it, whereupon the rascal instantly threw one arm around his head, covering his mouth, and at the same moment thrust the needle of a hypodermic syringe into his neck, injecting a quantity of the same potent and quick-acting drug with which, Nick immediately suspected, Clayton had been overcome by Margate at the time of his escape after the jewel robbery.

Clayton knew nothing of what had followed, having quickly lost consciousness, and Nick now left Mr. Langham and the physicians to enlighten him with the sad information. He withdrew with Patsy and hastened down to the private library in which he had been talking with Langham only a few minutes before.

Patsy already had told him about finding the waiter, Toulon, and Nick's next move was to send for Mrs. Julia Clayton, whom he briefly informed of his suspicions, and then cautioned the dismayed woman against inadvertently betraying the secret she so long had kept from all the world.

The shocking news now was generally known, and the house was in confusion. Guests were hurriedly departing, leaving sympathetic messages with the butler and other servants. All keenly felt that they could be of no assistance in the investigations then in progress, and that they were better out of the way.

"Gee whiz! there's nothing to this, chief," commented Patsy, turning after closing the door upon Mrs. Clayton. "This is Margate's doings, all right."

"Undoubtedly," said Nick. "He served Clayton the same trick as before."

"Surest thing you know."

"We will try later to find out how he got away with the girl. It would be useless to undertake it at present, and immediate pursuit is out of the question. A hundred conveyances have left here during the past half hour."

"I guess you are right, chief," Patsy agreed.

"I know that I am," Nick replied. "We may, however, accomplish something of importance. Margate is a past master of the art of making up and impersonating others. It seems very evident that he impersonated the waiter Toulon, but whether with Toulon's consent and assistance, or whether he is an innocent victim of the rascal, is an open question."

"That's right, too," said Patsy.

"We may find the correct answer to it," Nick added. "Did Toulon appear to be in bad shape, as if the assault was a genuine one?"

"He did, chief, for fair, as far as that goes," Patsy reported. "He appeared to be telling the truth. Here is the cigarette he began to smoke. I found it near the bulkhead door."

"I will size up the fellow and judge for myself," said Nick. "Find Chick and have him bring Toulon in here. See the caterer, also, and tell him not to leave before I have talked with him."

Patsy hastened to obey.

Chick entered with the waiter a few moments later and closed the door.

Pierre Toulon had recovered from the assault. He was a man of medium build, with dark features and a black mustache, waxed at the ends. There was a bruise on his forehead and his lower lip was slightly scratched, also one side of his neck. His collar was wrinkled and soiled, but his garments had been brushed.

"Come nearer, Mr. Toulon, and be seated," said Nick. "I want to question you about the assault. You are employed by Mr. Lemaire, I am told."

There was nothing in Nick's voice, looks, or manner denoting that he had any covert designs. He spoke very pleasantly, with a tinge of sympathy for his hearer. Toulon approached a bit gingerly, nevertheless, and seated himself on the edge of a chair, directly opposite the detective.

"Yes, sir, I work for Mr. Lenaire," he replied. "I am a waiter."

"How long have you been in Lenaire's employ?"

"About two weeks, sir."

"I understand that he sent you up to Mr. Clayton's room, Toulon, to ask Mr. Vandyke to join him in the dining room."

"Yes, sir, he did."

"About what time was that, as near as you can tell?"

"I would say it was near ten o'clock, sir."

"Did you return to the dining room after taking the message to Mr. Vandyke?"

"No, sir. You see, sir, I didn't take the message," said Toulon, with some signs of embarrassment.

"No?" queried Nick, as if surprised. "I understood that you did. How was that?"

"Well, you see, sir, I was near dying for a smoke," Toulon explained. "I thought it would be a good time to slip out and have one. So I went out to one side of the house, thinking I'd stay only a couple of minutes, just long enough to have a whiff or two, sir. But ——"

"Ah, I see," said Nick, interrupting. "You then were attacked by the three men."

"Yes, sir. Hang them, that's just what came off."

"One of them must have impersonated you, Toulon, for the message was taken to Mr. Vandyke."

"Taken to him?" Toulon appeared astonished. "Is that so, sir?"

"Yes, surely," Nick nodded. "But what now puzzles me, Toulon, is how he could have known anything about the message, Lenaire having given it to you."

"Well, sir, he might have been listening under the dining-room window when Mr. Lenaire gave me the message," Toulon quickly suggested, with his gaze fixed on the detective's face.

"Ah, by Jove, I hadn't thought of that," Nick exclaimed, with countenance lighting. "That may explain it, Chick, after all."

"Yes, indeed," Chick quickly agreed, now seeing precisely at what Nick was driving. "It certainly clears up that point."

"Surely," Nick added. "I'm glad he suggested it. So, instead of immediately taking the message, Toulon, you slipped out to have a smoke."

"Yes, sir, a short one."

"From your pipe, or——"

"No, sir, a cigarette," Toulon quickly put in.

"Ah, I see," Nick bowed, glancing at the waiter's hands. "I don't know that you are to be blamed. I know what it means, Toulon, to hanker for a smoke. Are you in the habit of smoking cigarettes?"

"I am, sir."

"What kind do you use?"

Toulon hesitated for the hundredth part of a second. He then said quickly:

"Any old kind, sir. I'm not particular."

"I prefer the Egyptian," Nick remarked agreeably. "They have rather more flavor. I wouldn't mind having one, too, or any old kind, as far as that goes—if you have yours in your pocket, Toulon."

A tinge of red appeared in Toulon's cheeks, while his brows knit perceptibly.

"I haven't, sir," he replied, in some confusion. "I lit the last one I had and threw away the box. Mebbe one of the other waiters has some. I'll ask them, sir, and ——"

"Oh, no, we'll not go to that trouble," Nick interposed, smiling. "I can get along without one. I merely thought that I'd try one of yours while we were discussing this knavish business."

"I'm sorry, sir, that I haven't one."

"It don't matter. Just where were you, Toulon, when you saw the three men?"

"I was near the bulkhead door and steps to the cellar,"

Toulon now replied glibly. "But I didn't see the men, sir."

"Why was that?"

"Because they were hidden on the steps, sir, and they jumped on me before I could get a look at them."

"Was the bulkhead door open?"

"It must have been, or I would have heard them open it."

"I see."

"The first I knew, sir, was when they sprang on me from behind," Toulon proceeded to explain. "One of them cracked me on the head with a sand bag. Another got me by the throat and jabbed something into my neck. Here's where it scratched me. It semed to take all the strength out of me. Then they bound and gagged me, sir, and then threw me down the steps and closed the door."

"Possibly, Toulon, I can find the finger prints on your neck," said Nick, rising. "They might enable us to identify your assailant, if he is a crook and——"

"I don't think so, sir," Toulon quickly objected. "I have been rubbing my neck, sir, and——"

"Ah, of course," Nick cut in, resuming his seat. "That would obliterate them. Could you identify either of the men, Toulon?"

"No, sir. They wore masks."

"All three?"

"Yes, sir."

"H'm, that makes it bad," Nick remarked.

"So it does, sir."

Then, without having evinced the slightest suspicion of his hearer, but rather the contrary, in fact, Nick added pleasantly:

"That's all, Mr. Toulon, and I'm very much obliged to you. When I find the three rascals, I will make them pay dearly for what they have done to-night."

"I hope so, sir," Toulon declared, rising to go. "I'd like a crack at them myself. I bear them no good will, sir, you can bet on that."

"I guess, Toulon, it would be a safe bet," laughed Nick, as the waiter withdrew from the room.

Toulon glanced back over his shoulder and grinned expressively.

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER'S INSIGHT.

Langham Manor, by which name the great stone mansion and vast estate of the millionaire banker was known, presented a very different appearance in the gray light of daybreak on the following morning.

The beautiful grounds and driveways near the house were littered with bits of rubbish invariable to such an occasion. The lawns were marred with great tire tracks, where divergencies from the driveways had been unavoidable. Hundreds of paper lanterns that had lent an aspect of fairyland to the attractive park now hung limp and discolored below the drooping branches of the dew-damp trees.

Within the house was a mourning husband, robbed of his bride of two short hours, and now resting in merciful slumber under drugs administered by the physician.

Also a sad and anxious father was impatiently awaiting the work of the detectives, necessarily deferred until daylight, but who had been forbidden to accompany them when they left the house at early dawn that June morning. It then was only four o'clock.

"He would be in our way and serve only to hinder us," Nick said quietly, after he and Chick had turned a rear corner of the house.

"Sure thing," Chick muttered. "We can do better alone."

The detectives were not then in evening dress. They wore the business suits and woolen caps in which they had journeyed from New York the previous day in Nick's powerful touring car. Each had in his pockets, moreover, a brace of revolvers and a disguise or two, taken from their suit cases that morning, without which frequently needed articles they never left home.

Danny Maloney, the detective's chauffeur, then was asleep in the house, Nick having decided not to arouse him before he was definitely needed.

"I want one look at the grounds near that bulkhead door," he observed, replying to Chick. "It will show whether Toulon put up any struggle with his three assailants, if there really were three."

"You doubt that, also?" questioned Chick.

"I doubt most of what Toulon stated."

"You took extraordinary care to hide your distrust," replied Chick, smiling.

"Bet you!" said Nick tersely. "He was the best thread I could pick up, if not the only seemingly reliable one, and I made sure of keeping him in the dark."

"But why did you suspect him so quickly?"

"Because he, or a counterpart of him, had been to Clayton's room," Nick explained. "I no sooner began to question him, Chick, than I felt sure I was right."

"Why so?"

"First, because he has worked only two weeks for Lenaire. That smacks of having got the job with a view to assisting in this crime."

"I see," Chick nodded.

"He betrayed himself a moment later by the readiness in which he explained how the knave who had impersonated him could have learned of Lenaire's message to Vandyke."

"By listening under the dining-room window."

"Exactly. His readiness showed plainly that he was prepared with that explanation."

"True. I suspected that, also your own designs, when you agreed with him so quickly and remarked to me that he had cleared up that point for us."

"I knew you would, of course," said Nick. "I then questioned him about the short smoke he came out to enjoy. He said it was from a cigarette and that he is in the habit of using them. He lied. The fingers of a habitual cigarette smoker of his class are invariably discolored with nicotine. There was not the slightest sign of it on his."

"Good work, Nick."

"I clinched it by carelessly asking him what kind he smoked," Nick added. "He hesitated, and then said any old kind. He could not think of the name of one. Whoever heard of a cigarette smoker who could not instantly state what kind he habitually buys?"

"Good work again, old man."

"I then pretended I wanted one," Nick went on, smiling. "That caught him again. He had none, but quickly claimed that he had lit his last one and threw away the box. A cigarette smoker always retains the box until he

lights his last one. Look around. Toulon could not have thrown a small pasteboard box so far that, if it were out here, we could not see it."

"Surely not," Chick agreed. "Naturally, Nick, he would merely have tossed it upon the ground."

"Certainly. But it is not here, nor does the ground show any signs of a struggle."

"None whatever."

"He said he was assaulted from behind, but he displayed a bruise on his forehead, said to have been inflicted with a sand bag," Nick added derisively. "He should have been bruised on the back of his head, if attacked from behind."

"That's right, too."

"And when I suggested finding on his neck the finger prints of the crook, you saw how quickly he objected and claimed to have been rubbing his neck."

"True again, Nick, and very significant," Chick nodded.

"Plainly enough, Chick, all of his story and the evidence we found were cut and dried, fixed for him to cover his tracks," said Nick. "But the rascal overleaped his mount."

"He did, indeed, no mistake."

"Afterward, when I talked with Lenaire, he told me that Toulon had suggested his seeing Vandyke and sending a word of thanks to Clayton. That was covertly done to provide a plausible reason for going to Clayton's room and getting Vandyke out of the way."

"Undoubtedly."

"I have cautioned Lenaire to keep his mouth shut about it. He fell for the suggestion and gave Toulon the message. Toulon then went up and got rid of Vandyke. Instead of returning to the dining room, however, he stole out-of-doors, where he was fixed up as you found him. In the meantime, made up to resemble Toulon, Dave Margate went up and downed Clayton in the manner described. Take it from me, Chick, that's how the trick was done."

"And all this, of course, is why you started Patsy on Toulon's trail."

"Certainly," said Nick. "Lenaire and all of his assistants returned to New York in a car attached to the special train. I put Patsy wise to my suspicions and sent him along in disguise to shadow the rascal."

"But what do you make of Patsy's telegram?"

Nick took it from his pocket. It had been received at two o'clock that morning, dated from New York at one, and it contained only the following terse sentences:

"Toulon has telephoned long distance. Don't know what. Heard only a man's name, Beardly. Find him and get next. Am still trailing Toulon. PATSY."

Nick read the message aloud and returned it to his pocket.

"It admits of only one interpretation," he added. "The special arrived in New York about midnight. Toulon, as soon as he was at liberty, evidently telephoned to a man named Beardly. Patsy could overhear only that name, but he knows that Beardly is located in this section, or he would not have wired us to find and investigate him."

"But no such man is known in these parts."

"The name may be an alias, or the man may be living with some one who has a telephone, and whose name Patsy could not get. That of Beardly does not appear in the telephone-exchange book. We must follow up the clew, nevertheless."

"But how——"

"The way may be opened," Nick interrupted, glancing toward the house. "Here is a door opening upon an entry and stairway used by the servants. The stairs are within ten feet of the rooms occupied by Clayton and Clara Langham."

"You think she left by this door?"

"I do. She certainly would have been seen if leaving by any other."

"But would she have gone out with Margate, made up as Toulon?"

"No, probably not," said Nick. "But suppose Margate removed his mustache and the wig he must have worn, and thrust them into his pocket. Don't forget that he is a human counterfeit of Chester Clayton."

"By Jove, I see the point," said Chick. "You think he fooled Miss Langham into going with him."

"Exactly," Nick nodded. "Clayton's overcoat and hat are missing. It's a hundred to one that Margate put them on and got away with the girl, who already was clad to leave at a moment's notice."

"In that case——"

"We must trace them," Nick cut in. "Margate, if turning the trick in that way, would not have ventured to the front of the house, nor the opposite side. The couple would surely have been seen and recognized."

"That goes without saying," Chick agreed.

"It would have been equally hazardous to have gone toward the stable and garage back of the house."

"Surely. The driveway was brightly lighted and filled with people."

"That leaves only the path by these outbuildings and through the east park," said Nick, walking in that direction. "The path is too hard to have received any footprints, but there is a road through the woodland beyond the park. You can see patches of it through the trees. We may find tracks there."

"It's the road most likely to have been selected by the rascal, if he had a conveyance of any kind," Chick declared.

"That's the very point."

"None of the guests, and probably no one else, would have gone as far as that into the woodland."

"A possibility that may simplify matters," said Nick. "If we find tracks of a vehicle, or a motor car, we may reasonably infer that we are on the right trail."

"That's as true as gospel."

"I expect, too, that Margate has not fled many miles away."

"Why so?"

"For several reasons," said Nick. "First, because the main roads were occupied by numerous cars departing after the reception, and there would have been a possibility of recognition."

"That's true."

"Second, because the scamp would prefer to remain as near as possible to Langham Manor, in order to stealthily learn what would be done and who is suspected."

"That's right, too."

"Third, because it would have been easier to come here last night than from a long distance. Fourth, because Margate undoubtedly has abducted the girl with

a view to forcing a big ransom from her father and Clayton, and a near hiding place would be more convenient for getting into safe communication with them, in order to frame up a desired deal."

"All of those points are too consistent, Nick, to admit of a denial," Chick agreed. "It's long odds that the rascal and his victim are within twenty miles of us."

"More probably half that distance."

"Do you really think so?"

"I certainly do," Nick said confidently. "It's the course that would appeal to me, Chick, if I was doing the same knavish job. Margate is as clever in knavery as I could be, and he may have reasoned along the same lines. If he has—ah, by Jove, this looks very much like it!"

"What's that?"

Nick stopped and pointed to some damp earth near one side of the path they had been following.

Distinctly outlined in it was a single, narrow footprint. Obviously, it had been left there by a woman's boot.

"By gracious, I guess you are right," said Chick, crouching to examine it.

"I think so," said Nick. "We came near missing it, however, for it's at one side of the path."

"They may have strayed a little from it in the darkness."

"Probably."

"The path is too hard to retain an imprint."

"We may find others farther on," said Nick. "It's a hundred to one that this was caused by the boot of the missing girl. Notice the stylish length and pointed heel."

"It sems to be a cinch."

"She was going this way," Nick added. "We'll take the same direction."

He glanced at his watch while they hurried on. It then was half past four. They were the only two persons out at that early hour, but a myriad of feathered songsters were thrilling the woodland, which the beams of the rising sun now had begun to penetrate.

Fifty yards brought them to the gravel road mentioned, of which both began to make a careful inspection. There were tracks to be seen, those of wagons, carriages, and automobile tires; so many of them, in fact, that nothing definite could be determined from them.

"Nothing denotes that a conveyance of any kind remained here for a time," Chick observed, after a vain scrutiny. "It ordinarily would have been left on one side of the road."

"We'll seek in each direction," said Nick. "I'll go this way, you that. If you discover anything reliable, whistle to me."

"Enough said," replied Chick, as they parted.

Nick had covered about fifty yards in an easterly direction, vainly inspecting each side of the road, when he suddenly made another discovery.

Somewhat ahead of him, lying near the wheel tracks on one side, was what appeared to be a scrap of cloth.

Nick hastened to pick it up.

It was about two square inches of dainty lace, evidently torn from—a navy-blue veil.

Nick turned back instantly and whistled to Chick, who hastened to rejoin him.

"What is it?" he inquired, when Nick displayed his find.

"The bride wore a navy-blue veil," said he significantly.

"Oh, by Jove, that does settle it."

"It certainly does, Chick, and it's a pleasure to serve such a girl," Nick said, with some enthusiasm.

"You mean——"

"Why, it's as plain as the hole in a doughnut. She was taken away in a carriage or a motor car. She sat on one end of the seat, and she had discovered the knavery of which she was the victim."

"Why are you so sure of it?"

"Simply, Chick, because this bit of lace shows that it was deliberately torn from one corner of the veil. It is torn in two directions."

"I see."

"Plainly, then, the girl herself tore it off," Nick continued. "No one else would have done it. Nor would she, Chick, unless she had discovered her perilous situation."

"Surely not," Chick now declared. "I see the point."

"She contrived to tear it off without being detected, however, and then dropped it in the road."

"To show to searchers in which direction she was being carried."

"Exactly."

"By Jove, you are right," Chick cried approvingly. "It is, indeed, a pleasure to serve such a girl."

"This is not all," Nick added. "Take it from me, Chick, we shall find another scrap of veil before going very far. Since she was thoughtful enough to drop one scrap, and able to accomplish it without being detected, she would not stop with that. We shall, unless I am much mistaken, find others along the road."

"The trail of the blue veil," cried Chick. "That would show us the way. Let's hurry on."

Nick Carter needed no urging, and his prediction soon was verified.

They had walked only a hundred yards, when they discovered a second piece torn from the veil.

An eighth of a mile brought another; and, after the same distance, a fourth.

"She was in a motor car," Nick then said decidedly.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because of the distance between these bits of evidence. If in a slow-moving vehicle, a hack, or carriage, she could have torn off a fragment more frequently, and stealthily dropped it."

"You are right again," Chick nodded. "She certainly would have done so, moreover."

"We'll follow as far as the trail leads, Chick, at all events."

"I'm with you."

"It's not worth while to turn back for our machine," Nick added. "We can phone for it from some point, if we find it necessary."

"Sure."

"I still believe, however, that Margate is located within ten or a dozen miles, possibly half that distance. Time is too valuable for us to turn back."

"I agree with you."

"We already have covered more than a mile."

Walking on more rapidly, continuing to find at intervals a scrap torn from the veil, the two detectives had covered nearly four miles at six o'clock, and then they came to a point where the road forked in two directions.

"By Jove, here's a problem," said Chick, pausing. "Which fork shall we take? Neither road shows which our quarry took."

"I'll take one, you the other," said Nick, after a moment. "We'll follow them until one of us finds another scrap of the veil. That will guide us. Signal me with your revolver when you find a clew. I'll do the same."

"But suppose I find no more?" questioned Chick.

"We'll continue the pursuit separately," Nick replied. "We shall know that one of us is on the right road. Follow where it leads, then, and be governed by circumstances."

"Enough said," Chick readily assented. "That's the best course, I guess."

"Got any choice?"

"Of roads?"

"Yes."

"Not a bit, Nick. You say."

"Take the right, then. I'll follow the left."

"Shake. So long, Nick."

"Good luck, Chick."

They shook hands heartily and separated, striding rapidly away over each of the woodland roads, neither so much as dreaming how soon fate would again bring them together.

CHAPTER V.

THE NAME ON A SIGN.

It was not in the least degree by chance, but by a very remarkably clever bit of detective work, that Nick Carter had succeeded so quickly in picking up the trail of the miscreants by whom Clara Clayton had been abducted.

Only one detective in a thousand, possibly only Nick Carter himself, would so quickly have suspected Pierre Toulon of actual complicity in the daring crime; much less been able, even though suspected, to have clinched his distrust of the treacherous waiter by any such artful methods as Nick had employed. It had required the discernment and subtlety possessed only by the celebrated detective himself.

Nick keenly realized, nevertheless, that he had been very fortunate in that the victim of the crime was so self-possessed and resourceful a girl, and that the trail of the veil had been of inestimable aid to him in showing plainly in which direction her abductors had fled. The clever ruse to which she had resorted had, indeed, stimulated both detectives with additional eagerness to trace and rescue her.

Nick hurried on after parting from Chick, listening vainly for a signal from him, seeking vainly for another scrap of the blue veil, and also the while with eyes alert for any other evidence that would serve his purpose.

None rewarded his efforts. The road was so cut up with wheel tracks and tire marks, that nothing definite could be deduced from them. Nick had covered nearly two miles through the woodland road, in fact, before he made any new discovery.

Then a break in the woods brought a river into view. He could see patches of it glistening in the early-morning sunlight.

Presently, in the far distance could be discerned the church spires of a town, the dwellings of which were lost under the intervening hills.

"It must be three or four miles away," thought Nick. "I'm blessed if I know what town it is. If I could run across some farmer living in these parts, I might get information that would aid me. Beardly—that's not a common name. If I could find a man of that name—well, I think I would consider him open to suspicion, regardless of his looks."

Another half mile brought a sharp turn in the road and a more open view of the river. Several scattered mills could be seen in the distance on the opposite bank, evidently sawmills, which derived their supplies from the surrounding woods.

As he rounded the turn, moreover, Nick suddenly came in view of a large, old wooden house and several outbuildings. They were some fifty yards from the road and well down upon the river bank. A swinging sign on a pole in the clearing near the front of the house denoted that it was a tavern, or a somewhat isolated road house.

"By Jove, I now am in a way to strike oil," thought Nick, little dreaming just how he was to strike it. "Smoke is coming from the chimney. Some one in the house is up and doing. I'll hunt him up, or her, as the case may be, and see what I can learn."

Leaving the road, Nick glanced at the sign and read the name on it, then turned his steps toward the rear of the house, the door in front being closed, and the window curtains drawn down.

Before arriving at the rear corner, however, Nick brought up at the open door of a barroom of exceedingly primitive type, in which he found three men.

Two of them were rather roughly clad, dark-featured fellows of about thirty years of age, and both were seated at a round, bare table, each with a partly drank glass of ale before him.

The third was a brawny, red-featured man in his shirt sleeves. He was wiping the top of a dingy bar with a towel.

All looked a bit surprised when the detective's imposing figure appeared at the open door. None evinced any deeper feeling, however, as Nick stepped in and approached the bar.

He ordered a glass of ale and remarked agreeably, with a glance at the two men at the table:

"Fine morning, gents. Drink yours down and have another."

"Don't mind if I do," said one, replying.

"Good enough. What town is that up the river?" Nick asked.

The man behind the bar informed him, while drawing the ale from a faucet in the wall, and Nick took a chair at a window overlooking the grounds back of the house and the broad curve of the river.

His view of it was partly obstructed, however, by the old stable and other outbuildings. A path near them led down to a narrow, wooden float, or landing, to which a motor launch was made fast.

"You are Mr. Dugan, I take it?" Nick remarked to the man who was serving him.

"That's right," was the reply, with a nod.

"I read your name on the sign."

"I have run this place for a dozen years."

"Some distance from town, aren't you?"

"Not too far for my business," said Dugan, returning to wipe the bar. "There are some houses above here a piece, but I get most of my coin from parties who drive out from town."

"Sort of a road house, isn't it?"

"That's what."

"You didn't happen to hear a motor car go by last night, did you?" Nick asked carelessly.

"What time?"

"Between ten and eleven."

"No, I didn't," Dugan vouchsafed, with stolid countenance. "The best road is on t'other side of the river. Did you, Morley?"

The last was addressed to one of the men at the table. He shook his head and glanced at his companion, replying readily:

"No, I heard none. Did you, Conroy?"

"What time did you say?" questioned Conroy, gazing. "I'm a bit deaf, you know."

"Between ten and eleven," said Nick, with voice raised.

"A motor car?"

"Yes."

Conroy also shook his head.

"None went by at that time, sir, nor even later," he said assuringly. "I was sitting out front till near midnight. I'd have been sure to have seen it. Here's good luck, sir."

And Mr. Conroy arose with his glass of ale and began to down it.

"Same to you," returned Nick indifferently.

"Have you lost a car, sir?" questioned Dugan, gazing at him from over the bar.

"No. Some friends of mine are coming this way, and I wondered whether they had passed," Nick exclaimed evasively. "They may stop here, perhaps, on their way. I'm tramping through these parts and they have my luggage in their car. It's a big red one. You could not mistake it."

"They have not been here yet," said Dugan. "I'll keep it in mind."

"Oh, it don't matter much," Nick replied. "I'll round them up in the next town. I used to know a man up this way named Beardly. Ever heard of him?"

"Not as I remember," said Dugan, scratching his head. "Beardly?" questioned Morley, still gazing at the detective. "I don't know any Beardly in these diggings. What's his front name?"

"Andrew," said Nick, at random.

"I never heard of him. Did you, Jim?"

Conroy shook his head again, then finished his glass of ale and arose from the table.

"Sing out, Dugan, when breakfast is ready," he requested, a bit gruffly. "I'm going to wash up."

"Hold on, Jim," put in Morley. "Wait till I get outside of this. I'll go with you. So long, sir."

The last was addressed to Nick, who responded with a nod, and the two men swaggered from the barroom and disappeared in a narrow, dimly lighted hall adjoining it.

Nick listened indifferently to their receding steps. There had been nothing in the conduct of either that seemed to warrant distrust, nor in the looks of either, aside from their rough attire and somewhat dissipated faces.

The same was true of Dugan also, and of his decidedly rustic and inferior road house.

Nick lingered briefly, apparently to sip his drink, therefore, and incidentally he tipped back in his chair until it touched the window casing. As he did so, glancing out, he made another discovery which most detectives would have overlooked.

Beyond a corner of one of the outbuildings, and brought into view by his change of position, he observed an old dwelling and a near building of moderate size some fifty yards upstream and on the opposite bank of the river. A sign on the building caught the detective's eye.

The name on the sign was: "B. Ardley."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK'S SHREWD DEDUCTION.

Nick Carter read the distant sign with only indifferent interest.

"B. Ardley."

Then, like a flash, the phonetic significance of it arose in his mind. He asked himself how it would sound if uttered aloud.

"B. Ardley," he mentally repeated. "By Jove, that is almost like Beardly, if spoken quickly, or heard indistinctly. It must be that Patsy heard it in that way, since he could distinguish nothing more. He may have mistaken this name, B. Ardley, for Beardly. By gracious, it's worth looking into."

Nick's face had reflected none of his thoughts.

Dugan still was lounging over the bar, waiting the further wishes of his unknown patron.

Nick glanced at him and remarked:

"This is a fine river, Mr. Dugan, from which a good deal of power must be derived. I see there are a number of mills farther up the stream and nearer the town. Sawmills, aren't they?"

"Yes, sir, they are," nodded Dugan.

"What's that nearest one, that having a sign on top?"

"That's not a sawmill. The man who runs that place works over old rubber and culls out the best of it. He makes it into rubber tubes and pipes."

"What's that name on the sign?"

"Ardley," said Dugan unsuspiciously. "His name is Ben Ardley."

"You're acquainted with him, I suppose?"

"Well, not overmuch," Dugan vouchsafed, with somewhat sharper scrutiny. "He ain't the kind I fancy."

"No?"

Dugan did not respond to the insinuating query. He seemed to go into his shell, as it were, and he didn't speak again until Nick, after vainly waiting for him to do so, decided that he would not become too inquisitive. Instead, he remarked carelessly, as if the other topic had passed out of his mind:

"I suppose I must tramp to the town in order to get across the river."

"No, you needn't do that," said Dugan. "There's a ferry half a mile above here. You'll see the sign in front of a small wooden house. The man who lives there will take you across. He keeps a boat for that purpose."

"What's his name?" questioned Nick.

"Jones. He's all right. There's a bridge, too, below here a couple of miles."

"A bridge, eh?" thought Nick. "Does the other fork of the road lead to it?"

"Aye, it does," nodded Dugan.

"I remember passing it," said Nick, rising to go.

"Well, I'll be plugging along. It'll be hot walking later in the day."

"So 'twill, sir. Drop in again when you plug this way."

"I will, Mr. Dugan," Nick assured him.

He now detected a tinge of sarcasm in the man's voice, nevertheless, but he departed without betraying it.

"I'll be likely to drop in again sooner than you imagine, or will care to see me," thought Nick, a bit grimly. "I reckon I have brought up quite close to my quarry. Those two rats ducked out of the barroom quite suddenly, I remember, and Dugan closed his trap in a rather abrupt and significant way. I'll skin over the river and size up Mr. Ben Ardley. That may prove more profitable than hunting farther for Beardly."

Nick trudged on up the road, which followed the course of the river, and he presently arrived at the home of the ferryman, which was among the first of scattered dwellings which now appeared on that side of the stream.

Jones was up and out for business, it then being after seven o'clock, and Nick accompanied him down to the river bank, where they boarded a broad, flat-bottomed boat, which Jones operated with no other power than his own gaunt figure and wiry arms applied to a pair of oars.

"I stopped at Dugan's place back yonder for a drink," Nick remarked, when they were under way. "He seems to be a decent chap."

Jones was not communicative. No man can say less than a rustic, when so inclined.

"Decent enough," he allowed, in nasal tones.

"He keeps boarders, doesn't he?" Nick inquired.

"Reckon not."

"But I saw two men there, named Morley and Conroy."

"Never heard of them."

"That's so?"

"Yep."

Jones gazed vacantly at his cowhide boots.

Nick decided to try him on another tack.

"Do you do much business here?" he asked agreeably.

"Some," said Jones.

"Taken any strangers over lately?"

"One."

"Man or woman?"

"A she."

"When was that?"

"Last Friday."

"Three days ago," thought Nick, a bit amused. "He's not getting rich at that canter with this old tub. It would take a corkscrew, moreover, to draw anything out of him. I'll try once more."

"Who runs that place a quarter mile down the stream?" he inquired.

"Sign's on the building," said Jones, rowing steadily and vigorously.

"I cannot read it at this distance."

"Name's Ardley."

"Do you know him."

"Yep."

"Anything about him?"

"Nope."

"Does he employ any help?"

"Wife. No one else. Lookin' for a job?"

"By Jove, he loosening up," thought Nick, laughing inwardly.

Further inquiries evoked nothing of any importance from the taciturn ferryman, however, who landed his passenger, accepted his fee with a grin, and immediately pushed off his rude craft and started to return.

Nick found himself at the end of a narrow lane, about a stone's throw from two small dwellings, and he rightly inferred that it led to a more pretentious road running through the woodland farther back from the river. He arrived at it a few minutes later, then turned his steps in the direction of the Ardley place. A walk of a quarter mile brought him to a narrow road leading down to it.

Nick then paused and took from his pocket four pieces of the blue veil, which he had retained after picking them up on the opposite side of the river.

"If Chick has found any since we parted, and if my suspicions are correct, he by this time has crossed the bridge mentioned by Dugan, and he must be coming in this direction. I'll leave a trail for him that he can not mistake. If he finds four pieces of the veil here, instead of one, he will reason that I must have put them here, for the girl would not have dropped four in one spot. That will show him the way."

Nick dropped one blue fragment in the middle of the main road.

He then placed the other three where they could not be overlooked, and in a line plainly denoting the direction he was about to take. He lingered only to carefully put on a disguise which he thought would serve his purpose.

"Now, for Mr. Ardley," he said to himself, striding rapidly down the diverging road.

Something like three hundred yards through the woods brought him to a clearing back of the dwelling of the now suspected man. Off to the right was the faded old building used for his rubber business. One end of the clearing was covered with old boxes, barrels, and a huge pile of refuse.

Beyond the building, which was close upon the bank of the river, could be seen one end of a deep wooden sluice, in which revolved the wheel from which Ardley evidently derived the power to operate machinery of some kind.

Nick could hear no sound of any, however, though the dash and gurgle of water through the sluice faintly reached his ears.

As he came nearer the house, a brawny, hard-featured woman of middle age appeared at the back door. Her large, angular figure was clad in a calico wrapper, much the worse for dirt and wear.

"Is Mr. Ardley at home?" Nick inquired, pausing to question her.

"He's out in the shop," she replied, in rasping, nasal tones.

"Is he busy?"

"He's allas busy."

"Any one with him?"

"No. He's alone. You'll find him."

"You can bet I'll find him," thought Nick, far from favorably impressed with the woman. "She must be the wife Jones mentioned. She looks as if she had

done her share of hard work, and looks like a hard ticket, as well."

Nick presently found the man, and his impression of the woman faded to utter insignificance. He discovered him in one end of the building, that nearest the river, evidently engaged in repairing a leather belt which hung over a wheel of part of the overhead machinery, and for a moment Nick was fairly startled by his appearance.

For Ardley was a giant in stature, a huge, hulky, red-featured man of about fifty, with a mop of hair that hung like a lion's mane over his brow and ears. He was a type before which ordinary men wilt away to utter insignificance.

He was clad in coarse overalls, huge cowhide boots, and a thick woolen shirt, so open in front as to expose his massive neck and his great, bulging chest, covered with scraggly hair. His sleeves were rolled above his elbows, revealing a pair of brawny forearms, knotted with thick muscles and as large around as a ham.

He was, in fact, as prodigious and powerful and in a way as repulsive a man as Nick Carter ever had seen.

It was not in the detective's nature, nevertheless, to be deterred from his purpose by this ominous aspect of the man. He saw at a glance that he was a good deal of a boor and a brute. He saw, too, that he was gifted with no art to disguise his feelings and resort to subterfuge, if caught unprepared for an accusation; and, now seriously suspecting that he knew something about the crime of the previous night, Nick resolved to bring him up to the ringbolt then and there.

Ardley's huge face was purple from his exertions with the heavy belt, when, hearing the detective's footsteps on the floor, he turned and saw him.

"Hello!" he cried, with a leonine growl, as if surprised.

"How are you?" returned Nick complacently.

"What d'ye want?"

"You are Mr. Ardley, I suppose?"

"Yes. What d'ye want?"

"I want to talk with you for a few minutes," said Nick. "It's on important business. My name is Hudson. You are not too busy, I hope."

"Too busy!" Ardley echoed the words with a fierce, derisive snarl. "I ain't busy only with this cussed belt. That can wait. Sure you can talk with me, Mr. Hudson."

"Good enough."

"I'm never too busy to talk along with a gentleman. Important business, eh? What's it all about? Sit there, Mr. Hudson."

Ardley, with his sonorous voice rolling forth more heartily, as deep and full as the bellow of a bull, pointed to a cheap wooden chair, near which the detective was standing.

Nick accepted the invitation unsuspiciously.

Ardley seated himself on an empty box directly in front of his visitor, scarce five feet from him. With his shoulders hunched forward, his huge head drawn down, his muscle-bound arms resting on his massive thighs, he appeared more like a great, uncouth monster than of the order of man.

"What's it all about?" he repeated, gazing with ratty eyes at the detective's bearded face. "What's it all about, this 'ere important business?"

"It's about a girl who was stolen from home last night by a bunch of thugs," said Nick, steadily eying him. "I have reason to believe they came in this direction."

"Suppose they did?" questioned Ardley. "What's that to me? Why d'ye question me?"

"I hoped you might have seen them."

"Waal, you've got another hope."

"Or know something about them," Nick added.

"What I know about them, Mr. Hudson, or about anything else bar the making of rubber pipes, could be written on your thumb nail," Ardley growled, still gazing at his hearer. "I dunno anything about any thugs, much less a stolen gal."

"Don't you know a man named Pierre Toulon?" Nick asked, with sharper scrutiny.

"Never heard of him."

"Or David Margate?"

"Sam of him. I never heard the name."

Nick drew up a little in his chair, working one of his revolvers into a position in his hip pocket, enabling him to instantly draw it, if necessary.

"I noticed when coming here, Mr. Ardley, that you have a telephone in your house," said he.

"Aye, I have," Ardley admitted, with a nod of his huge head. "What o' that?"

"Well, I happen to know," Nick bluntly asserted, "that Pierre Toulon telephoned to you from New York City at one o'clock last night."

Ardley's red eyes took on a narrow squint. He reached out and rested his brawny hand on a long wooden lever, which appeared to govern the wheel over which ran the belt on which Nick had found him at work. At the same time he asked, more sullenly:

"How'd you find that out?"

"I have methods of my own for obtaining information," said Nick.

"You're a detective, eh?"

"Yes."

"I reckoned so."

"My statement is true, isn't it?" Nick demanded, more sternly.

"Suppose it is?" growled Ardley. "What then?"

"I want the truth from you, then, both about Pierre Toulon and the stolen girl. I intend to have it, too."

"Suppose you don't get it?"

"I will arrest you at once, Ardley, and take you with me," Nick forcibly informed him.

Ardley laughed derisively.

"I guess not," he cried.

"You have got another guess, Ardley, unless you——"

"So have you!"

Ardley had not stirred from his indifferent position until that moment, the position of a man who appeared to have no aggressive design, but who was content to rely confidently upon his prodigious strength.

With the interruption, however, his hand closed quickly on the wooden lever, which moved like a flash to one side under the swift action of his powerful arm.

Instantly a section of the floor under the detective's chair fell straight downward, swinging on hinges like a trapdoor.

It was like having the earth itself drop from under

him. Coming without the slightest warning, finding him utterly unprepared for such a trick, Nick had neither time nor means by which to collect himself, or to avoid the inevitable fall.

Like a flash, together with the chair on which he was seated, Nick vanished through the floor and sped downward through empty space.

The trapdoor swung upward like a pendulum, and Ardley, venting a roar of mingled triumph and derision, jerked it back in its former position and secured it with the lever.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GANG AND THE GAME.

Nick Carter did not fall far, yet far enough to jar him from head to foot and smash to fragments the chair on which he was seated.

Nick landed in about a foot of water, moreover, drenching him to the skin, yet the chill of which served instantly to revive him.

He found himself in almost total darkness. The only light came through a chink a foot or more above his head. It served to reveal four bare, wet walls of planking, however, also the floor through which he had been precipitated, with the trapdoor now grimly closed.

Nick had heard the crash of it when Ardley closed and secured it, also the mocking roar of the monstrous rascal, and it took Nick only a moment to determine in what sort of a trap he was confined.

He could hear the gurgling of the water in the mill sluice, separated from him by one of the plank walls, and he knew that the rocky ground under his feet must be on a level with the bottom of the sluice.

"By Jove, that was a quick and unexpected trick," he muttered, after scrambling up from the water swirling around him. "I'm in a section of the sluiceway that has been boarded in to reduce the flow of water to the wheel. If this rascal opens the gate that admits the water from the river—well, I shall be drowned like a rat in a trap.

"Did he have that infernal contrivance constructed for such emergency as that in which I placed him? This looks very much like it. I have in Chick, however, an anchor to the windward. If I can stave off a more devilish move by this scoundrel, it's long odds that Chick will show up in time to take a hand in the game."

It was not in Nick's nature to hurry to meet trouble halfway. He preferred to combat it only when it overtook him.

A brief examination of the four walls in which he was confined, and which inclosed a space about eight feet square, convinced him that immediate escape was utterly impossible.

Listening, he could hear Ardley's tread on the floor, but not a sound yet had come from the scoundrel, though several minutes had passed since he closed and secured the trap.

"By Jove, the rascal may be getting ready to open the sluice gate," thought Nick, shifting a revolver to his side pocket. "I guess I'd better shout up to him and engage him in conversation. I must find some way to play for time."

Nick was about to do so, glancing up at the gloomy floor, when the hurried tread of other feet fell upon his ears, quickly followed by a voice which he instantly recognized.

"Well, Ben, what do you say? Have you got him? I know you have, all right. Your face shows it."

"Margate's voice, as sure as I'm a foot high," thought Nick. "I have the satisfaction, at least, of having run down these rascals. That may not be all, by Jove, if they will only continue talking."

There appeared to be no immediate reason to doubt that they would, for Ardley was triumphantly stating what had followed the detective's entrance.

"You bet I've got him, Dave," he bellowed, in conclusion. "There's no way he can get out of the trap. I can drown him like a rat in a firkin. It's dead lucky you telephoned to me and put me wise."

"I did so as soon as he left the road house."

"He showed up there, did he?"

"Yes. Morley and Conroy were having a drink in the barroom when he came in."

"They knew him, eh?"

"Bet you!" said Margate expressively. "They came up and told me. I was just out of bed."

"How did you know he was coming here?"

"I stole down on the stairs and heard him ask Dugan about the sign on your building," Margate explained. "I knew by the way he spoke, then, that he would head for here. So I phoned over and put you on your guard."

"It's dead lucky you did," Ardley repeated. "He would have got me, all right, if I hadn't been wise. But I was ready for him. I had the chair right on the trapdoor. He planked himself down on it, when I told him to, like a kid on a circus seat. There was nothing to it after that. How did you fellows come over?"

"Dugan brought us in his launch."

"Where is he?"

"He remained to make her fast. Ah, here he comes, now."

All of this enlightening conversation was plainly heard by the listening detective. Mingled with the voices of the others, he occasionally heard those of Morley and Conroy, also the heavy tread of Dugan when he strode into the building, and Nick then knew that the entire gang was gathered there.

"So that is how it was accomplished," he said to himself, when a momentary lull in the conversation followed Margate's last remark. "That's why the milk is in the coconut. But don't get gay too quickly, you rascals, for you may throw a shoe."

Nick's train of thought was broken by another question from Margate.

"Have you seen him since you downed him, or heard from him?" he asked, with a more malicious ring in his voice.

"Not yet, nor a sound from below," Ardley informed him, with a growl.

"The fall may have broken his neck," cried Margate. "I hope it did. That would save us the trouble. Open the peek, Ardley. Let me have a look at him."

Nick reached for his revolver. Before he could draw it, however, the quick click of a metal spring fell upon his ears, and light entered his dismal confinement through a square hole in the floor, which was nearly four feet above his head.

At the same moment Margate's threatening voice cried sharply:

"Don't pull a gun, Carter, or I'll drop you on the instant. I've got you covered."

Nick looked up through the opening and saw the malevolent face of the rascal, also the gleam of light from the revolver aimed down at him.

"Take your hand from your pocket," Margate sternly added. "Make sure it's empty when you draw it out, too, or you'll hear something drop."

Nick removed his hand from his pocket.

"I already have heard something drop, Margate," he coolly answered, leaning against one of the plank walls.

"You're lucky to be alive after it," returned Margate, with a malicious leer.

"I'm not the kind that dies easy," Nick retorted.

"You're booked to get yours this time, all the same."

"Possibly."

"You might as well take off that spinach, too," Margate tauntingly added. "I know you, all right, and what you're out after."

Nick removed his disguise and thrust it into his pocket.

"I have found what I am after, Margate," he said, more sternly.

Margate laughed derisively.

"Much good that will do you," he replied. "You haven't found the one whom you are after."

"The time will come."

"Your time will, Carter, all right," snapped Margate, shaking the weapon at him. "It already has come, in fact. Here is where I get even with you for having queered my game of months ago. I have been lying low since then, and just waiting to frame up this job."

"You will lie low later, Margate, take my word for it," Nick said significantly.

Margate laughed again.

"Don't bank on that, Carter," he retorted. "I already have demonstrated that you are not in my class. That trick I served you in the Hotel Westgate ought to convince you of it."

"I admit it was clever. Otherwise, you never would have got by."

"Not more clever than that of last night," grinned Margate. "I don't mind telling you. I've got the woman, Clayton's new wife. I'll make him and her father pay all you robbed me of when you deprived me of Mademoiselle Falloni's jewels."

"I suspected that was your game," said Nick, with seeming indifference.

"You bet it's my game.'

"Take heed you don't lose it."

"Let me alone to do that," snapped Margate, more sharply. "I'm going to pay you, too, for having sent my good friends to prison. I'll send you to a closer confinement than they are in."

"I'll take your word for it."

"I knew you were at Langham Manor last night. I knew, too, hang you, that you would instantly take on this case and set to work to trace me. How did you do it so quickly?"

"Oh, it wasn't very difficult," said Nick. "Such fellows as you are quite easily traced."

"Is that so, Carter?"

"The circumstances should convince you of it."

"How did you contrive to hit my trail?"

"It's not my habit to explain my methods," Nick said slowly, bent upon prolonging the conversation, if possible.

Margate seemed to suspect something of the kind, for his brows knit suddenly and his eyes took on a more threatening gleam. He crouched nearer to the opening, again shaking his revolver at the helpless detective, while he cried more fiercely:

"You'd better hand it to me straight, Carter, or you'll mighty quick get all that's coming to you."

"Hand you what, Margate?" Nick drawled.

"Hang it, Margate, he's stringing you," Conroy now cried fiercely, gazing down at Nick over the other's shoulder. "The sooner he's handed his, Margate, the better 'twill be for us. There's no telling what he has up his sleeve, or who else is on the case. We may get it in the neck from another quarter."

"That's right, too," snarled Ardley sonorously.

Margate seemed suddenly impressed with the same threatening possibility. He sprang up, instantly closing the opening, and swung round to Ardley.

"Will that trap fill quickly, Ben, if you open the sluice gate?" he demanded, with a murderous light in his evil eyes.

"In about three minutes, Dave," was the reply.

"How do you open it?"

"By throwing that lever," said Ardley, pointing to a long iron bar near the wall.

Margate's face turned hard as flint.

"Throw it, then," he commanded. "Throw it, Ardley, and wipe this cursed sleuth off the earth. It's only the fate he has invited. Throw it, Ardley, and drown him like a rat in a sewer."

Nick Carter, listening grimly, heard Ardley stride toward the iron lever.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE BACK TRACK.

Nick Carter had reasoned correctly concerning the night telegram which he had received from Patsy Garvan, whom he had directed to shadow Pierre Toulon when the latter returned on the special train to New York with Lenaire and the several assistants whom he had brought to Langham Manor.

Patsy expected to have a busy night, but the jaunt Toulon led him far exceeded his anticipations.

It was after twelve o'clock when the train arrived in the station, where Toulon was employed for half an hour in removing to a wagon the articles belonging to the caterer.

He no sooner was at liberty, moreover, than he hurried to the nearest hotel, where he entered a telephone booth and remained for several minutes.

It was then that Patsy heard him call for a long-distance wire, also catching the name of B. Ardley just as Toulon closed the booth door, but mistaking it for Beardly precisely as Nick afterward suspected.

Unable to overhear more, Patsy seized the opportunity to write and send the telegram to Nick, which the detective received an hour later.

Patsy then shadowed Toulon to an all-night restaurant, where the waiter ate a hearty meal, remaining there until three o'clock and then returning to the railway station, where he purchased a ticket.

Patsy inquired a little later and learned that the ticket was for the same town noticed by Nick when approaching Dugan's road house that morning, and he immediately bought one for the same place.

"There's nothing to this," Patsy reasoned, quickly sizing up the circumstance. "He's going to take the back track. The rascal is going to return and join the gang that did that job last night. He probably wants his bit of the coin.

"The chief sized him up correctly, all right, and it still is up to me to stick to the frog-eating miscreant. It will be a cold day, by thunder, if I don't have a hand in rounding up the whole bunch."

Patsy did not think it necessary to again communicate with Nick by telegram, intending to telephone to him after reaching his destination, but the train did not enter the town until after seven o'clock that morning, and Toulon then kept Patsy on the move.

For he started at once on foot for the Audley place, diverging from the road just before arriving there, and approaching it by a short cut through the woods.

Patsy had kept him constantly in view up to that time, avoiding observation with some little difficulty, but he lost sight of him when the rascal suddenly plunged into the woods.

"Gee whiz! it won't do to let him give me the slip at this stage of the game," he muttered, at once increasing his pace. "I'm dead sure he has not seen me, so he cannot have ducked in there as a ruse, bent upon holding me up. If there is any holding up to be done, by gracious, I'm the gink who is going to do it."

Patsy quickly confirmed his reasoning upon arriving at the point where Toulon had entered the woods. There was no sign of the rascal.

Hurrying on in the direction Toulon evidently had taken, however, Patsy soon came in sight of the sign on the top of Ardley's building, and a moment later in sight of the building itself, just as Toulon turned one corner of it on his way to the door.

It was precisely at that time that Margate ended his mocking talk with Nick, and then commanded Ardley to throw the lever that opened that floodgate to the sluice.

The unexpected arrival of Toulon caused that murderous design to be temporarily deferred, though by no means discarded, and in the interval that ensued Patsy Garvan was not idle.

"By Jove, it was to this fellow that he telephoned," he said to himself upon again reading the sign. "Ardley must be one of the gang, and Toulon has hiked back here to join them. The entire gang may be in the building, for all I know.

"There's a launch made fast at the river bank, but it don't belong here, or a float would be provided for it. I'll make a bid, by gracious, to find out who is in there and what's doing. I can reach one of those end windows without being seen from the house. Let come what may, by thunder, I'll have one stealthy look."

Patsy was not slow in acting upon this determination. He sized up with a glance the possibilities of approaching the building without being seen from within.

Leaving the fringe of shrubbery at the edge of the woods, under which he had briefly lingered, Patsy stole back of the huge pile of refuse mentioned, then crawled back of several barrels and boxes, finally reaching a point some twenty feet from an end window of the building and near the corner around which Toulon had disappeared only a few moments before.

Patsy now could faintly hear the sound of voices from within the building.

He shifted both of his revolvers to the side pockets of his sack coat, then crept from his concealment and peered cautiously through a lower corner of the window.

He saw and recognized Margate.

He saw Ardley with his hand on the long iron lever.

He saw Dugan, Conroy, and Morley, all of them forming so ominous a picture that Patsy instantly decided that there was more doing than he had anticipated. He could not hear what Margate was saying, however, who then was talking with Toulon, and he now went a step farther. He drew both revolvers and crept around to the open door through which Toulon had entered the building.

Patsy had arrived too late, nevertheless, to hear how Toulon had explained his unexpected return, that he had thought it necessary to report what Nick had said to him the previous night, denoting that he might have incurred the detective's suspicion.

"It's no use talking, Mr. Margate, I've got a scare on," he was saying, when Patsy paused outside of the open door. "I went into this job under protest, you know, and only because you said it would be soft walking. I want to bolt, and I'm going to after you pay me what you agreed. I've got a scare——"

"What are you afraid of?" Margate demanded, interrupting.

"Well, I know what it means to be up against Nick Carter," frowned Toulon. "He's the worst ever, and likely to——"

"Stop a bit!" snapped Margate, with a scornful gesture. "Do you know where Nick Carter is at this moment?"

"No. Do you?" gasped Toulon, staring.

"You bet I know," cried Margate, pointing. "He is in a trap under this floor, a trap adjoining the sluice. Do you see that lever Ardley is gripping? It opens the floodgate of the sluice. When Ardley throws it—we shall drown Nick Carter like a rat in a trap."

Pasty's ears tingled and his face turned as threatening as a thundercloud.

"If that big bull moose throws that lever, then, he'll throw it over my dead body," he said to himself, stealing close to the door and peering in to watch the huge ruffian.

Toulon stared like a man nonplused.

"Nick Carter there?" he gasped. "Drown him like a rat? But that will be murder. It means——"

"Never mind what it means, you milk-and-water monkey!" Margate fiercely cut in. "I know what it means if we let him live. I'll wipe this cursed dick out of my path, if it's the last thing I do in this world. Throw the lever, Ardley! Throw the lever and drown the infernal sleuth!"

Patsy Garvan was in the building before the last was said.

Before he could utter a warning cry, however, for he would have held up the entire gang without bloodshed, if possible, he saw Ardley, who was ready and willing to obey, sag back on the iron lever.

Patsy's revolver barked on the instant.

The report rang like thunder through the old building.

The bullet went true to its mark.

Ardley threw up his hands, with blood gushing from a hole in his head, and without so much as a groan he pitched forward against one of the walls. His huge figure struck a small door at that end of the building. It broke from its hinges, and the crash of it was mingled with that of the ruffian himself when both struck the floor.

Patsy did not hesitate for an instant.

"Hands up!" he yelled, striding toward the startled group. "I've got bullets for all, and I'll drop the first who reaches for a gun."

Margate did not reach for a gun. He had been struck by Ardley when the latter fell, and he was within a foot of the broken door. He moved like a flash and darted through it.

"Hang him!" thought Patsy. "The worst of the bunch."

He fell back a step, to a position from which he could watch both doors, and also the four dismayed men who stood with their hands in the air.

CHAPTER IX.

CONVERGING FORCES.

It was a noteworthy coincidence, though by no means extraordinary, that all three detectives arrived at quite nearly the same time at the Ardley place. Each coming from a different direction, however, neither was at first aware of the presence of the other.

Chick Carter, after parting from Nick, hurried along the woodland road to the right, searching all the while for another fragment of the torn veil, but covering nearly a mile before he found one. This was, in fact, the last fragment dropped by the abducted girl during her forced flight.

"By Jove, this shows that I am on the right road, and Nick, of course, must be following the wrong one," thought Chick, upon picking up the scrap of lace. "It would be useless for me to signal him. We are too widely separated by this time for him to hear me. Nor would there be anything in turning back and trying to overtake him and set him right. That would be a loss of valuable time. I'll plug on, therefore, and see where the trail leads."

It was another case of all roads leading to Rome. The distance to the Ardley place by the way Chick was taking, however, was considerably longer than that followed by Nick, which allowed for the episodes in which the latter figured while the former was covering the distance.

Half an hour brought Chick to the river and to the bridge mentioned by Dugan. He then could see in the far distance the spires of the town, but he was too far down the stream to see the road house or any of the buildings Nick had noticed.

"The rascals must have gone this way, of course, for I have passed no diverging road," Chick rightly reasoned, while striding on across the bridge. "They may have been heading for that town, or for some isolated place near it. There is no branch road at the end of the bridge, so I cannot possibly take a wrong one. It would be encouraging, nevertheless, to find another fragment of the girl's veil. Something evidently prevented her from dropping more of them."

The road wound through the woods and out of view of the river after leaving the bridge, and another half hour had passed when Chick again came in sight of the stream. He then could see the distant road house on the opposite bank, but no sign of any persons near it.

Dugan's launch no longer was at the float where Nick had observed it.

Chick hurried on, and presently met with a surprise, a most agreeable one. He caught sight of another fragment of the torn veil, and of the narrow road leading toward the river.

"Eureka!" he muttered, hastening to pick it up. "Here's another scrap, at last. The girl must have dropped it to denote that her abductors took this side road. In that case—oh, by Jove, here are three more, and lying in a line denoting——"

Chick had stopped short in the side road, and his process of reasoning then was precisely what Nick had anticipated. The circumstances, in fact, admitted of only one logical conclusion.

"By gracious, there's nothing to it," thought Chick, elated. "Nick has been here. No one else could have had four pieces of the veil, and surely no one else would have placed them so suggestively in this direction. He must have picked up a clew that brought him here, and he evidently figured that I would come along this road. So he left these here to direct me."

Chick reasoned, too, that the side road must lead to a dwelling, the occupants of which Nick had been led to suspect, and he then became more cautious.

Leaving the road, lest he might possibly be seen, he struck into the woods on the left and picked his way over a low hill, a course that brought him to the edge of the clearing directly back of the Ardley dwelling.

Chick had arrived at a point, however, from which he could see only a part of the building a short distance beyond the house, and at which Margate and his confederates had arrived a few moments before. He was too far away, moreover, for their voices to reach his ears.

It so happened, too, that Toulon and Patsy Garvan then were approaching the building, but Chick had come from nearly the opposite direction, and the building itself hid them from his view.

Though unable to see any sign of Nick, a fact that somewhat mystified him, Chick made one discovery that immediately shaped his course of action.

He had arrived just in time to see Jane Ardley come out of the back door of the house, from which she walked away several yards, and then turned to gaze up intently at an attic window, so intently and for so long a time, in fact, that Chick naturally gazed in the same direction, wondering what occasioned her interest.

He then saw that the attic window was closely curtained. He could see, too, that the curtain evidently was held in place with several wooden slats running across it and nailed to the casing.

"By Jove, that window is barred," he said to himself. "The woman is looking to see whether it can be detected from outside, or for some other equally suspicious reason. It's dead open and shut, therefore, that some one is confined in that attic room. Is it Clara Clayton, or has Nick met with some mishap and fallen into the hands of a gang? There now seems to be no one around here but the woman. By thunder, I'll mighty soon find out."

Chick whipped out a revolver and thrust it into his side pocket.

Jane Ardley had retraced her steps and was entering the back door of the house. She left it open and passed through the kitchen.

Chick saw her disappear into a room beyond the kitchen, and he instantly seized the opportunity presented. He darted across the clearing and crouched for a moment near the open door.

Listening, he could hear the woman moving in an interior room, but there was no sound of voices.

"She's alone here, all right, barring whoever is on the top floor," Chick reasoned. "I'll get her, for a starter, and then look farther."

He did not defer operations. He was in a proper mood for aggressive action. He stole quickly through the kitchen and to the open door of the adjoining room, in which Jane Ardley then was engaged in clearing the breakfast table.

The floor creaked under Chick's weight, and the woman turned and saw him.

As quick as a flash she seized a knife from the table and snarled savagely:

"Who in thunder are you?"

"Tell me, instead, who you are and who is confined in your attic," Chick sternly answered.

Before the last was fairly uttered, however, the woman went ghastly white, then dropped the knife and turned toward the nearest window.

That she was going to scream for help was obvious, and Chick's face turned as hard as flint. He reached the woman with a bound, seized her by the throat to prevent any outcry, and forced her against the wall in one corner.

"You utter a sound, you jade, and I'll silence you with a blow," he threatened fiercely.

Gasping for breath, with abject fear now manifest in her evil eyes, the woman ceased struggling, and Chick quickly handcuffed her arms behind her and forced her into a small closet near by.

"Now tell me the truth," he said sternly. "Who else is in the house, and where——"

"You'll get nothing from me," the woman snarled between her teeth, glaring at him with impotent fury.

"Won't I?" snapped Chick. "I'll not wait, then, to argue the point."

Seizing a towel from the shelf in the closet, he quickly tied it over the woman's mouth, then closed the closet door and locked it, removing the key.

Knowing that he had no time to lose, and apprehending that others might return to the house at any moment, Chick then hurried through a narrow adjoining hall and up two flights of stairs, all the while with eyes and ears alert, and his revolver ready for instant use.

There was no one to oppose him, however, and half a minute brought him to the door of the attic room. It was closed and locked, but a key hung on a nail in the casing. As he removed it, a girlish voice from within the room cried affrightedly:

"Who's there?"

Chick recognized the voice, and his face lighted. He flung open the door and entered, saying heartily:

"I'm here, Mrs. Clayton, and I'll bet you're glad to see me."

The scene that met his gaze was about what he was expecting. Lying on a rude bed, to which she had been tied with strips of cord, was the abducted girl the detectives were seeking, still clad in her traveling costume, with her hat, gloves, and veil on a chair near by.

Chick Carter could never forget the swift change that came over her anxious, distressful white face when she beheld him. It brightened with mingled gratitude, joy, and relief that could not be expressed in words. A cry broke from her, then his familiar name, and then she gave way to hysterical weeping, which she at first could not govern.

Chick hastened to liberate her, however, and told her the danger of needless delay; and the thought of further peril served most to calm her and nerve her to immediate action.

"Oh, I am equal to anything, Mr. Carter, to escape from this dreadful place and that terrible man," she cried, seizing her hat and rising to accompany him.

"Don't be alarmed. We shall accomplish it," Chick assured her, while he assisted her down the narrow stairway from the attic.

"God grant it!" she cried, still sobbing. "Oh, how can I ever repay you?"

"Don't speak of that. Tell me, instead, how Margate contrived to lure you from the house last night," Chick added, aiming to divert her mind from the immediate situation.

"I was deceived, terribly deceived," replied Clara, complying while they continued to pick their way down the stairs. "I had seen no stranger enter my husband's room. I saw him suddenly come out, however, or supposed it was he, and hasten into mine."

"I understand," Chick nodded.

"He was putting on his overcoat and hat," Clara continued. "He said I must go with him at once, that he had planned to elude our guests, that he had our limousine in the road through the east park, and that my father was awaiting us in it."

"That was the way it was done, eh?"

"How could I doubt, or distrust him," she went on. "He had come from my husband's room. I went with him willingly, of course, and——"

"That was perfectly natural, Mrs. Clayton, under the circumstances," Chick put in, as they descended the lower stairway.

"We went out by the servants' door and stairs," said Calara. "Not until we arrived in the park road, where I saw an open motor car in the starlight, did I realize that I had been duped, that I really was in the hands of Chester Clayton's double."

"I see."

"It was then too late. I was seized by him and two other men and forced to enter the car. They threatened to kill me if I uttered a cry. I did not dare do so. I was forced to go with them."

"But you contrived to drop fragments of your veil," said Chick admiringly.

Mrs. Clayton's countenance lighted.

"You found them, then?" she cried inquiringly.

"You bet we found them."

"I pretended to be crying bitterly all the while," she went on to explain. "So I was, in fact, with my head bowed in my hands, but I contrived to tear off bits of the veil at intervals and drop them from the car. I hoped——"

"Your hope is fulfilled," Chick interposed. "They en-

abled us to trace you. Nick should be somewhere near here, unless he——"

He stopped short, interrupted by the sudden sharp crack of a revolver—that of Patsy Garvan, when he killed Ben Ardley.

"Great Scott!" Chick exclaimed. "Wait here, Mrs. Clayton. I'll see what that means."

He did not wait for an answer, but darted out through a side door of the house.

The first person he caught sight of was Margate, just leaping through the broken door of the building, some fifty yards from the house. The rascal was reaching for a revolver, and was turning toward the door at the opposite end of the building.

Margate caught sight of Chick at that moment, however, instantly recognizing him, and all that was cowardly in him leaped into play. He did not put up a fight, did not venture attempting to rescue his confederates in crime, but he turned like a mongrel cur and darted down to the launch near the river bank, bent only upon making his escape.

Chick saw his design and pursued him, whipping out a revolver. At the same moment he caught sight of Patsy Garvan and the cornered gang through the broken door. Without pausing, he yelled at the top of his lungs:

"Keep them covered, Patsy. I'll get this other rat."

Patsy heard him and recognized his voice. It was like sweet music, too, in Patsy's ears. He felt, then, that he could have held up a regiment.

Margate had a considerable start on the detective, and he already had cast off the launch and was cranking the motor wheel when Chick approached the bank. By a stroke of sheer good luck he got the ignition with the first turn of the wheel, and a swirl of bubbling black water surged out from under the boat's low stern. She made way instantly, and Margate dropped flat near the wheel, out of range of a bullet.

Chick then was dashing down the bank at top speed. He saw the launch start, then veer into the stream, moving faster, and he saw that her stern was swinging for a moment nearer the bank.

It was a moment when some men would have hesitated, most men, in fact—but not Chick Carter.

He dropped his revolver into his side pocket, then caught his breath for a flying leap.

He missed the moving stern with his feet, but caught the low aft rail as he fell, fiercely clinging to it and dragging astern in the wild swirl of water from the propeller, till his arm felt as if it was being pulled from his body.

Margate had seen him leap and heard him swashing astern. Seizing a boat hook, the rascal rushed aft, with murder in his evil eyes.

Chick was expecting this, and he had contrived to draw his revolver from his pocket. He saw Margate coming, saw him loom up against the blue of the sky, saw the uplifted boat hook aimed at his head, and Chick's hand rose above the swirl and spume around him.

Bang!

There was only one shot, nor need for another.

A splurge of red covered Margate's evil face and shirt front. He threw up both hands and pitched headlong over the boat's side, instantly sinking from view in the black, swift-flowing stream.

Chick let go of the launch, and she sped on across the river.

He paddled here and there, watching for Margate to rise to the surface, but the body did not appear.

Apprehending that Patsy might be in need of aid, Chick lingered only to feel sure that Margate had been drowned, if not killed with the bullet, and he then swam ashore and hastened up to the building.

Patsy still had his prisoners well in hand, however, with theirs still in the air.

Ardley was lying dead on the floor.

The four remaining crooks were speedily secured after Chick returned, and all that remains of the stirring case may be briefly told. They, including Ardley's wife, were tried and convicted of the abduction, and were sent to prison for a term of years.

Margate's body never was recovered from the river, but there seemed to be no reasonable doubt that he had been shot, or drowned.

Ten o'clock on that eventful morning found the detectives returning to Langham Manor with Clara, and the scenes of joy that followed could not be verbally described. The wedding journey had been deferred by knavery of the basest kind, but only briefly deferred—owing to the prompt and masterly work of Nick Carter and his assistants.

It may go without saying, too, that they were most liberally paid for that work by those they had served so splendidly.

THE END.

"Driven from Cover; or, Nick Carter's Double Ruse," will be the title of the long, complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 159, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out September 25th. In this story you will read of the great detective's success in finally rounding up Margate. Then, too, you will also find the usual installment of the serial now running in this publication, together with many other interesting features.

DO YOU AGREE?

In an old Hindu manuscript was found this remarkable decision of a dispute. Two travelers sat down to dinner; one had five loaves, the other had three. A stranger passing by desired permission to eat with them, which they agreed to. The stranger dined, put down eight pieces of money, and departed. The proprietor of the five loaves took up five pieces and left three for the other; who objected, and claimed half. The case was brought before the chief magistrate, who gave the following judgment:

"Let the owner of the five loaves have seven pieces of money, and the owner of the three loaves one."

Now, strange as this decision may appear at first sight, it was perfectly just; for, suppose the loaves to have been divided into three equal parts, making twenty-four parts of all the eight loaves, and each person to have eaten a third share, therefore, the stranger must have eaten seven parts of the person's bread who had the five loaves—or fifteen parts when divided—and, of course, only one belonging to him who contributed three loaves, or nine parts.

SNAPSHOT ARTILLERY.

By BERTRAM LEBHAR.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 163 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XX.

A RASCAL'S LUCK.

It was quite by accident that young Mr. Gale, son of the proprietor of the *Chronicle*, learned of the *Bulletin's* contemplated exposé of police conditions in Oldham. He happened to be passing police headquarters just as Patrolman John Hicks, with whom he was acquainted, came out of that building. One glance at the policeman's scowling face was sufficient to inform Gale that something was wrong.

"What's the matter, John?" he inquired. "You look worried."

"I am worried, Mr. Gale," Patrolman Hicks replied. "Something happened to me last night while I was on duty that has got my goat. Walk up the street with me a little ways, and I'll tell you all about it."

Gale, scenting a possible story for the *Chronicle*, eagerly accepted this invitation.

"It was shortly before two this morning," Officer Hicks began. "I won't deny that I was taking a little nap. You see, Mr. Gale, night work don't agree with me at all. I think it's an outrage to ask a human being to do it."

"Certainly," Gale agreed heartily. "But what happened, John?"

"What happened was this, Mr. Gale: I was leaning against a lamp-post, sort of dozing off—as I say, I'm not going to deny it—when all of a sudden there comes a flash of light which hits me right in the eyes, and a sort of explosion. Well, of course, I opens my eyes quick, and there, right in front of me, is a big black automobile with three young fellers in it. Before I can ask any questions, that automobile moves off rapidly up the street and disappears."

Gale was by no means a slow-witted young man. The probable origin of that flash of light immediately suggested itself to him. There arose in his mind also a suspicion of the identity of at least one of the three occupants of the big black automobile.

"Didn't one of those fellows have a camera in his hand, John?" he inquired excitedly.

"I didn't notice any camera at the time," replied the policeman, with a scowl; "but I guess they must have had one, all right. For, although I never suspected it—otherwise you can be sure I'd have chased that automobile—I have learned since that it was a flash-light picture of me the rascals was after."

"Of course it was," said Gale, with a laugh. "How long did it take you to get wise to that fact?"

"It was not until a few minutes ago that I found it out," the policeman admitted. "I thought at the time that that flash of light was caused by a fuse blowin' out in the car, or somethin' of that sort. You see, I don't know much about automobiles. And I might have gone on thinking that if it hadn't been for me meetin' Patrolman Tony Debbs at headquarters just now, and his tellin' me what happened to him last night."

"And what happened to Tony Debbs?" inquired Gale, greatly interested.

"He was taking a nap in a lumber yard on his beat, and first thing he knows he gets woke up by a flash of light in his eyes—the same kind of a flash that I got. Tony jumps up quick, and there was a young feller standin' there with a camera in his hand. Imagine the nerve of him!"

"Did Debbs catch him?" Gale inquired eagerly.

"No; he wasn't quite quick enough. The scamp got away in a big black touring car containing two other young men. From Tony's description of the automobile and the rascals inside, I'm pretty sure it was the same bunch that I was up against."

"Undoubtedly," Gale agreed. "But do you mean to say, John, that neither Debbs nor you recognized any of those fellows?"

"No; we didn't. You see, they wore goggles—the kind that automobilists wear, you know—and them things are pretty much of a disguise. Who do you suppose those rascals was, Mr. Gale? And what do you think they wanted our pictures for? I tell you, it's got me worried. And Tony's worried, too. He's got an idea that that rag of a *Bulletin* is behind it all. Do you think he's right?"

"I certainly do, John," Gale replied. "There isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that those pictures were taken for the *Bulletin*, and will be prominently displayed on the front page of that disreputable sheet to-morrow morning. And I shouldn't be surprised," he added sagaciously, "to find other pictures there, too. You can depend upon it, John, that you and Debbs weren't the only cops those chaps caught napping last night. The fact that they hired an automobile indicates that they were out for a big killing."

"The scoundrels!" growled Officer Hicks. "Surely, Mr. Gale, we can do something to prevent them from printing our pictures in their newspaper? Ain't there any way of stopping them?"

A malicious glint came to Gale's eyes. "Probably there is, John," he said. "We must see what we can do. Perhaps it will be possible not only to prevent them from publishing the pictures, but to put them in jail, besides, for violating the new anticamera law."

As he finished speaking, his gaze lighted on a boy who was walking on the opposite side of the street.

"Seems to me I know that kid," said Gale. "He's employed in the *Bulletin* office. My father pointed him out to me on the street the other day as Carroll's office boy."

Then his face suddenly lighted up as an idea came to him.

"Excuse me for a few minutes, John," he said to the policeman. "I'm going to have a talk with our young friend across the way. I've got a sort of hunch that he may be able to help us."

CHAPTER XXI.

TEMPTED.

"Pardon me, sir, but may I take the liberty of asking you if you are not a newspaper man?" said Gale, addressing Editor Carroll's office boy.

Master Charles Miggles, better known in the *Bulletin* office as "Miggsy," regarded the speaker with some suspicion. Miggsy was only fourteen years old, and not in the habit of being addressed as "sir." To be looked upon

as a newspaper man was also a brand-new experience for him. He had never dared to consider that his job as office boy in the *Bulletin* office entitled him to that classification.

Miggsy's first thought, therefore, was that he was being joshed by the good-looking, nattily dressed young man who thus addressed him. A brief study of the latter's face, however, caused him to change his mind. Apparently this polite stranger was perfectly serious.

Whereupon Miggsy's chest suddenly swelled with pride. Nothing could have flattered him more than to be treated in this fashion. He was a precocious youngster, and since the tender age of twelve his greatest regret had been that he was not yet old enough to use a razor.

"I may be wrong, of course," the good-looking young man went on, with a smile, "but I don't think so. I am a pretty good judge of men, and there is something about your appearance that tells me that you are a newspaper man. Am I right, sir?"

Miggsy smiled graciously. "You are a good guesser, mister: I am on the *Daily Bulletin*," he said, fervently hoping that the other would not inquire as to the specific nature of his duties.

"I knew it!" the good-looking man exclaimed triumphantly. "I can tell a brother scribe every time. Shake hands, old chap. I, too, am a newspaper man. My name is Gale—formerly of the New York *Daily News*, now of the Oldham *Daily Chronicle*."

Miggsy's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "Gee!" he exclaimed excitedly, "I know who you are. You're the son of the guy what owns the *Chronicle*. I heard about you being in town."

Gale smiled. "Yes, my father does own the *Chronicle*," he said simply. "I have come to help him run the sheet. We are going to introduce a lot of improvements, and run the paper on the lines of a New York daily. By the way, Mr.—er—Mr.——" He paused inquiringly.

"Miggles," said the boy. "Mister Charles Miggles."

"Thank you! By the way, Mr. Miggles, one of our first changes will be to enlarge our reportorial staff. My father has asked me to get him some good men. How would you like to work for the *Chronicle*?"

Miggsy could scarcely believe that he was not dreaming. Could it really be possible that this affable young man did not suspect that he was only a fourteen-year-old office boy? Could it really be that he, Miggsy, was being offered a job as a reporter on the *Chronicle*?

His first impulse was to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity which fate had thrown his way. In his precocious brain there arose the daring thought that he could make good. He had long been of the opinion that news gathering was "dead easy," and that he could go out and cover a story as well as "some of them boobs in the *Bulletin* office what called themselves reporters."

Once he had plucked up his courage, and asked Mr. Carroll to give him a chance at reporting. The proprietor of the *Bulletin* had laughed in a most unfeeling manner, and told him to wait until he grew some.

Miggsy frowned now as he recalled that unpleasant incident. As though it mattered what a fellow's age was, so long as he could deliver the goods!

Gale laid his hand upon the boy's shoulder with a patronizing air.

"If the proposition appeals to you at all," he said, "suppose you come and talk it over with my father, right now, Mr. Miggles. If you are willing to make a change, I think we can put you to work immediately. How would you like to cover police?"

How would he like to cover police! The job of President of the United States didn't appeal to Miggsy nearly as much as that. His eyes sparkled at the thought.

Then suddenly it occurred to him that he could not possibly bluff his way into this new job, as he had thought of doing. As soon as he entered the *Chronicle* office he was sure to be unmasked; for unfortunately he was known to several members of that newspaper's staff. And—alas, cruel fate!—they knew him, not as Mr. Charles Miggles, a brother scribe, but as plain Miggsy, the *Bulletin's* office boy.

"Come, what do you say, Mr. Miggles?" said Gale, with an encouraging smile. "Will you come with me now, and talk it over with my father? I think it will pay you to do so."

Miggsy decided that candor would be his best course. After all, there was a chance that he might be able to convince this nice young man that notwithstanding his painful youth and his lack of actual experience, he was quite competent to cover police for the *Chronicle*.

"I'm afraid I ain't quite as old as I look, Mr. Gale," he began diffidently.

"That doesn't matter," was the reassuring response. "Age is of no consequence. It is ability that counts, Mr. Miggles."

"And I ain't had any experience at reporting," Miggles went on, hanging his head. "I've been doing—er—inside work."

Gale received this admission with a pleasant smile. "Lack of experience isn't of much consequence, either, Mr. Miggles," he said. "As a matter of fact, we prefer to take on green reporters and train them to our ways. So don't let those things worry you, old man."

Miggsy's face lighted up at these words. "All right, then," he cried eagerly. "If that's the case, I'm on."

With a smile of satisfaction, Gale hurriedly led the boy to the Chronicle Building, and bade him wait in the editorial room while he went in to have a short preliminary talk with his father in the latter's private office.

A few minutes later Gale came to the door of the private office, and beckoned to Miggsy to enter.

"I've paved the way for you," he whispered to the boy. "Put up a good front, now, and you'll surely get the job."

The old gentleman with the white mutton-chop whiskers who was seated at a desk in the center of the room smiled benevolently at his youthful visitor.

"How do you do, young man?" he said. "Pray be seated. My son has been telling me that you would like a position on the *Chronicle's* reportorial staff."

"If you please, sir," returned Miggsy, sitting on the extreme edge of a chair and fidgeting nervously with his hat. Not that Miggsy was habitually shy, or easily put out of countenance, but the momentousness of this occasion had got upon his nerves.

"Humph!" grunted the elder Gale, looking keenly at the boy. "It seems to me that you are somewhat young to be a reporter."

"I can do the work, sir," declared Miggsy. "And—I expect to grow, sir."

The proprietor of the *Chronicle* appeared to be greatly tickled by this answer.

"You expect to grow!" he echoed, with a chuckle. "That's pretty neat. Very well said, young man. I see you have wit. That is an important qualification in newspaper work. Besides, my son, here, approves of you. In fact, I may say, young man, that he has taken a great fancy to you; and I have implicit confidence in my son's judgment. Therefore I am inclined, in spite of your exceedingly youthful appearance, to give you a chance." He turned to his son inquiringly. "What do you think we had better give this young man to do?"

"I thought we might put him in Tomlinson's place, to cover police," the younger Gale suggested.

The proprietor of the *Chronicle* leaned back in his chair and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. "Humph! I don't know. Covering police is a pretty difficult assignment. It requires ingenuity and nerve. Do you think this young man has ingenuity and nerve?"

"I feel sure that he has," declared the younger Gale stoutly. "I am confident that Mr. Miggles will make good, governor."

"Sure!" exclaimed Miggsy eagerly. "You just try me, sir."

The proprietor of the *Chronicle* smiled at the boy approvingly. "I like that suggestion, young man. It shows that you have self-confidence—a most valuable asset in the newspaper business. I have a good mind to put you to the test, right now. Suppose I were to send you out on a trial assignment, which would give you a chance to prove to me that you have sufficient ingenuity and nerve?"

"That's a good idea, governor," exclaimed the younger Gale, with great enthusiasm. He turned and winked at Miggsy. "As the old saying goes, 'actions speak louder than words.' Send Mr. Miggles out on a trial assignment right now, with the understanding that if he covers it successfully he starts right in to cover police for the *Chronicle* at a salary of—what will the salary be, governor?"

"Oh, I guess we'll start him at fifteen dollars a week," replied the elder Gale carelessly. "With rapid advancement if he proves deserving, of course."

Miggsy's eyes glistened. He could scarcely believe that he was not dreaming. His wages on the *Bulletin* were three dollars a week. The thought of earning five times that much, and of being a reporter instead of an office boy, quite took his breath away.

"Just try me, sir!" he exclaimed eagerly. "All I ask is a chance to show what I can do."

"Very well, my boy," said the proprietor of the *Chronicle*, with a benevolent smile, "you shall have that chance." He stroked his white mutton-chop whiskers meditatively. "Let me see, now; what assignment shall we give him? Can you suggest one, my son, that will be an adequate test of his nerve and ingenuity?"

His son shrugged his shoulders. "I prefer to leave it to you, governor," he said.

The elder Gale gazed up at the ceiling for a few moments. Then, as though he had found an inspiration there, he turned to his son with a chuckle.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "Suppose we send him to get those *Bulletin* pictures?"

"The very thing," declared the younger Gale enthusiastically. "That certainly will be a fair test of Mr. Miggles' ability. It is definitely understood, governor, that if Mr. Miggles makes good on this assignment he is to cover police for us, at a salary of fifteen dollars per week."

"Certainly; that is the agreement. Explain to the young man, my son, exactly what he has to do."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRAITOR.

Miggsy's eyes opened wide with astonishment as he listened to what the younger Gale had to say. From the expression which came to the boy's face it was evident that the proposition was exceedingly distasteful to him.

"But I couldn't do that, gents," he protested. "Really, I couldn't. Can't yer make it something else?"

The elder Gale shook his head deprecatingly. "It is just as I feared," he muttered. "The young man is lacking in nerve. I am afraid, my son, that he isn't quite qualified to cover police for the *Chronicle*."

"It ain't a question of nerve, boss," protested Miggsy plaintively. "I ain't afraid to do it. I ain't afraid of anything. But it wouldn't be honest. It would be stealing—this thing that you want me to do."

The younger Gale frowned. "Nonsense!" he said sharply. "You mustn't talk like that, Mr. Miggles. Do you think for a minute that my father or I would ask you to steal? You ought to be ashamed of yourself for suggesting such a thing."

The boy looked puzzled. "Well, you want me to swipe them pictures from the *Bulletin's* photo-engraving room, and bring them to you, don't you?" he asked. "Ain't that stealin'?"

"Certainly not," replied the younger Gale indignantly; "not when it's done for a newspaper. Circumstances alter cases, you know, Mr. Miggles. In newspaper work lots of things are justified which might be looked upon as wrong in ordinary life."

"Very true," chimed in the proprietor of the *Chronicle*. "A newspaper reporter on an assignment is just like a soldier in time of war, young man. He must recognize no law save the law of doing his duty—of carrying out the orders of his superior officers. It wouldn't do, you know, for our troops to refuse to shoot at the enemy on the grounds that it is wrong to shed human blood. Yet a soldier would have just as much reason to argue that killing is murder, as you have to argue that—ahem—obtaining those pictures for the *Chronicle* would be larceny. As my son has very properly remarked, circumstances alter cases."

Miggsy was somewhat dazzled by this sophistry. "I suppose there's somethin' in that," he muttered hesitatingly.

"You can bet there's a whole lot in it," declared the younger Gale. "My father has put the case very well, I think. If you had ever worked on a big New York newspaper, Mr. Miggles, you wouldn't hesitate for a minute about covering this assignment. In New York reporters are called upon to do little things of this sort quite frequently. It is looked upon as perfectly proper."

This argument had great weight with Miggsy. He knew that this nattily dressed young man had been a reporter on a New York newspaper, and therefore might well be considered an authority on Park Row journalistic ethics. And if it was perfectly proper to steal for a newspaper in New York, thought the boy, then, likewise, it must be perfectly proper to commit larceny for a newspaper in Oldham. His opposition began to waver.

"But let us have no further discussion about the matter, my son," cried the elder Gale impatiently. "If this young man does not care to undertake this assignment, we certainly have no wish to persuade him to do so. Of course, we do not really need those pictures. I merely suggested the assignment as a means of testing his courage and ingenuity. We will let the matter drop. No doubt I shall easily be able to find somebody else to cover police for the *Chronicle*. At fifteen dollars a week we ought to have no difficulty in getting a man for the job."

This reminder of what he was about to lose proved too much for Miggsy. The mention of that munificent salary quenched the last flicker of his conscience.

"You don't have to get nobody else, Mr. Gale," he said hastily. "I'm going to cover police for you. I'm going back to the *Bulletin* office now, to get them pictures."

At this the elder Gale smiled at him approvingly, while the younger Gale slapped him heartily on the back.

"That's the way to talk, old chap!" the latter exclaimed. "I see you've got the right stuff in you, after all. You're going to make a great reporter. Bring those negatives here just as soon as you can, and if any prints have been made, don't fail to grab all of them. Don't forget, Mr. Miggles, that not a single copy must be left behind."

"I understand," said the boy. "You want me to make sure that them pictures ain't published in the *Bulletin* to-morrow morning. I get you."

Miggsy had been sent out by one of the *Bulletin's* reporters to purchase a paper of tobacco; and while he had been gone considerably longer than this errand required, the delay was not commented upon when he returned. Of course, nobody in the *Bulletin* office dreamed of suspecting that the youngster had been in the camp of the enemy.

Consequently it was not a difficult matter for Miggsy to obtain possesseion of those precious negatives. The ruse which he employed in order to obtain them has already been described. Having ascertained that no prints had as yet been made, he slipped the films into his pocket, and hurried down the stairs which led from the *Bulletin's* photo-engraving room to the street.

But on his way down, as he passed the closed door of the editorial room, he experienced a sudden qualm. The sight of that familiar door brought to him a realization of the enormity of his act.

"It seems like a rotten trick to double cross the old pape," he mused. "Mr. Carroll has always treated me pretty white. That time when I was laid up with a broken anakle he sent me wages around to the house every week, and kept me job open for me until I was well again."

The thought caused him to hesitate on the stairway, but the hesitation was only momentary. There came to his mind, just then, the recollection of that time when he had asked the proprietor of the *Bulletin* to give him a chance as a reporter, and Carroll had laughed uproariously at the suggestion.

That recollection was sufficient to harden his heart. "The *Chronicle* is willing to make me a reporter, at fifteen dollars a week," he mused. "Wouldn't I be a chump to pass up this grand opportunity? I guess Carroll will be darned sorry he laughed when he sees me coverin' police for the rival pape."

Ten minutes later he was once more in the private office of the proprietor of the *Chronicle*.

The Gales, father and son, received him with great cordiality. "Did you get them, young man?" the elder Gale inquired eagerly.

"Yes, sir," replied Miggsy, throwing the films upon the desk. "Here they are, sir."

"But how about the prints, Mr. Miggles?" the younger Gale demanded anxiously. "You don't mean to say that you left them behind?"

"There wasn't any prints," the boy explained. "Neilson, our photo-engraver—I mean their photo-engraver—hadn't made any. These negatives were all they had."

"You are quite sure of that?" the younger Gale demanded searchingly.

"Yes, sir; I am quite sure. I was very careful to see that no copies were left behind."

The two Gales exchanged glances of congratulation. "I guess our friend Carroll will have to get a new front page for to-morrow's issue," the proprietor of the *Chronicle* chuckled. "It gives me great joy, my son, to deprive our esteemed contemporary of its star feature."

His son grinned. "Yes; my only regret is that we cannot publish the pictures ourselves," he said. "Of course, our friendship for the police department makes that quite impossible. It is too bad. It would be such a rattling good joke on that confounded Camera Chap if we could use his snapshots on the front page of to-morrow's *Chronicle*."

The elder Gale smiled deprecatingly. "As you have said, my son, that is quite out of the question. As we run the administration organ, the pictures are useless to us for publication. But I have no doubt we shall be able to find other uses for them."

Then the proprietor of the *Chronicle* dipped his hands into his trousers pocket, and produced a silver coin, which he extended toward Miggsy.

"You have done well, my boy," he said; "very well, indeed. Here is a half dollar for you."

Miggsy thought it was somewhat beneath the dignity of a reporter to receive a fifty-cent tip like a common office boy, but, not wishing to hurt the old gentleman's feelings, he decided not to debate the point.

"Thank you, sir," he said, pocketing the coin. "When shall I start in to cover police?"

As Mr. Gale appeared not to have heard the question, Miggsy took the liberty of repeating it. "When do I start in on the job?" he inquired. "Shall I go over to police headquarters now, sir? I'm ready."

To his great astonishment the proprietor of the *Chronicle* stared at him coldly. "Ready for what, young man?" he inquired.

"To cover police, sir."

A laugh from the younger Gale— a cruel, jeering laugh —brought a sudden chill to the boy's heart.

"You cover police! Why, you're only a kid!"

"A mere child," chimed in the elder Gale, stroking his mutton-chop whiskers. "Come around again five or six years from now, and we may be able to find room for you on the reportorial staff of the *Chronicle*, my boy, but not before then."

"But you said that if I made good with them pictures I was to have the job, at fifteen dollars a week," cried Miggsy, a choke in his voice.

The proprietor of the *Chronicle* turned inquiringly to

his son. "Did I say that?" he asked. "Do you recall my saying anything to give this boy such a mistaken impression?"

"Certainly not," was the reply. "I am afraid the boy is subject to hallucinations."

"You certainly did say it!" cried Miggsy hotly. "And I've made good! I've brought you them pictures. What more do you want?"

Tears came to the boy's eyes. "I've queered myself with the *Bulletin*," he sobbed. "I can't go back there now. I'l be out of work, and me mudder needs every cent I make. Please, please, Mr. Gale, if you won't let me cover police, find somethin' else for me to do in the *Chronicle* office."

The proprietor of the *Chronicle* shook his head. "I regret to say there are no vacancies," he said coldly. "We couldn't find room for you here even as an office boy. Besides, I am afraid you are not quite honest, young man. The fact that you have pilfered those pictures has made a bad impression upon me. It is my belief that a man or a boy who would steal for me would also steal from me."

He turned to the younger Gale. "My son, I will trouble you to put this noisy boy outside," he said.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SAME GAME.

Miss Melba Gale, having occasion to consult her uncle about a household matter which required immediate attention, decided to visit him at his office.

As she neared the Chronicle Building, she encountered a fourteen-year-old boy who was sobbing as though his young heart were breaking.

Even if this boy had been a total stranger to Melba, the chances are that she would have stopped to inquire the cause of his unrestrained grief, for she was the most tender-hearted and sympathetic of girls. But the fact that she recognized him as Fred Carroll's office boy, who had on several occasions been the bearer of missives from that young man to her, added greatly to her interest.

"Why, Miggsy," she exclaimed, stepping up to the grief-stricken lad. "What is the matter?"

The weeping boy removed his knuckles from his eyes long enough to learn the identity of his fair interrogator.

"I want to die!" he wailed. "I've queered meself with the *Bulletin*, and I've been handed a lemon by the *Chronicle*. I want to die. It ain't no use livin' any more."

Melba stared at him in astonishment, unable to make head or tail of this lament. Then she laid her small, gloved hand gently on his shoulder.

"Don't be silly, Miggsy," she said softly. "You mustn't talk in that wild fashion. Come with me to the drug store across the street, and tell me all about it while we're drinking an ice-cream soda."

But Miggsy shook his head disconsolately. Ice-cream sodas, although he was exceedingly partial to them under other and happier circumstances, did not appeal to him in the slightest in his present state of mine.

"I tell you I don't want to live no longer, Miss Gale," he whined. "If it wasn't that I'm such a good swimmer I'd go and throw myself into the river. Yes, indeed I would. I've lost me job on the *Bulletin*—maybe Carroll will send me to jail, too—and I've been double crossed by them welshers on the *Chronicle*. I don't want no ice-cream soda, Miss Gale; but if you'll do me a favor, and buy me a drink of carbolic acid, I'll be much obliged."

In spite of his evident distress, Melba could not help laughing at these desperate words.

Then, becoming serious again, she inquired, with an inflection of astonishment: "Do you really mean to say that Mr. Carroll has discharged you, Miggsy?"

"If he ain't discharged me yet," sobbed the boy, "he will when he finds out that them pictures have gone. I guess he'll put the police on me tracks, too. I'm a fujertive from justice, that's what I am, Miss Gale."

By adroit questioning Melba managed to get his story. It was a great relief to him to confide his troubles to somebody, and he related the whole affair to the astonished and indignant girl.

When he had finished, Melba Gale's pretty face was very grim. Her hands were clenched tightly and her eyes flashed.

"It's an outrage!" she exclaimed. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Miggsy, for doing Mr. Carroll such a bad turn; but I realize that you were strongly tempted by those who have far more cause to feel ashamed of themselves; so I am going to ask Mr. Carroll to give you another chance."

The boy shook his head despairingly. "He won't do it. I double crossed the pape, and Carroll ain't the sort to overlook a thing like that."

"I'll do my best to persuade him," said Melba, with a confident smile. "If I fail—although I am quite sure I won't—I'll speak to my uncle, and insist upon his finding you a job on the *Chronicle*. So don't worry, Miggsy. I'm sure that you'll get employment in either one place or the other."

Leaving Miggsy somewhat cheered by this assurance, she proceeded to the *Chronicle* office, with the intention of telling her uncle and cousin in plain terms what she thought of their conduct.

She intended, too, to demand that they return the stolen negatives to the *Bulletin;* but she had no hope that her demand would be complied with.

However, she did not carry out these intentions; for, as she approached the door of her uncle's private office, her ears caught a fragment of conversation which suggested to her a much better plan.

"I wonder who those fellows are?" the elder Gale was saying. "Their faces are not at all recognizable in the negatives. Just for curiosity's sake, I think it would be worth while to have a print made of each of them."

"Yes," his son assented. "I must confess that I, too, am curious to see what they look like. Give me the films, governor, and I'll go upstairs to the photo-engraving room, and have Michaels make some prints."

It was these words, which came to her through the partially closed door, which gave Melba her daring idea.

Treading as noiselessly as possible, she hurriedly descended the short flight of stairs which led to the street, just in time to avoid being seen by her cousin, who came out of the private office, and went upstairs to the photo-engraving plant.

"Here, Michaels," the latter said to the *Chronicle's* photo-engraver, "I want prints of these negatives just as quick as you can make them. They're not to be made into cuts. We want merely the prints."

The younger Gale did not wait upstairs in the photo-engraving room while the prints were being made. For

failing to do so he afterward reproached himself bitterly. But not having the slightest suspicion of what was going to happen, he bade Michaels bring the pictures to him as soon as they were done, and went downstairs to rejoin his father.

It was more than an hour later that the latter remarked: "How about those prints, my son? It seems to me it is taking Michaels an awful time to get them out."

"By Jove, that's right!" exclaimed the other. "I had forgotten all about them. I'll go upstairs and see how he's getting along."

Michaels looked at him in astonishment when he inquired about the prints. "How do you expect me to make them, Mr. Gale," he said, "when you've got the negatives downstairs?"

"What's that?" exclaimed Gale. "Got the negatives downstairs! What the dickens are you talking about, Michaels? I handed them to you over an hour ago."

"Sure you did, Mr. Gale; but you took them back again five minutes afterward."

Gale frowned. "You don't look drunk, Michaels, but you certainly talk like it," he said indignantly. "You know very well that I was only up here once. What do you mean by saying that I took these films back again?"

"Well, I don't mean that you came yourself, but you sent for them, which is the same thing," rejoined the photo-engraver. "You don't mean to say that you didn't send your cousin, Miss Gale, up here for them?"

Gale's face turned pale. "I certainly did not!" he gasped. "Do you mean to tell me that she was up here?"

"She certain was, sir—five minutes after you went down."

"And asked for the pictures?"

"Sure thing. Is anything wrong, Mr. Gale?"

"Anything wrong! I should say there was!" snapped Gale. "You careless fool! Don't you know better than to hand out negatives to any Tom, Dick, or Harry that comes here and asks for them? What kind of a system have you got in this place, anyway?"

The photo-engraver's face darkened. "See here, young feller, don't you be calling names. I don't hand out negatives to any Tom, Dick, or Harry; but if the boss' niece comes up here, and says that she's been sent for the pictures, you don't suppose I'm going to put her through a cross-examination before I give 'em to her, do you? What's this all mean, anyway? I don't understand it at all."

Gale didn't stop to enlighten him. Muttering something under his breath, he turned on his heel and hurried downstairs to his father's office.

"Seen anything of Melba, governor?" he demanded.

"Not since breakfast time. Why do you ask?"

"Simply to hear myself talk, I guess," said Gale, with an angry laugh. "I might have known that you hadn't seen her. She took jolly good care, of course, to avoid being seen by either one of us."

"Why, my son, what on earth is the matter?" exclaimed the proprietor of the *Chronicle* uneasily.

"The matter is that we've been stung—stung by that precious ce of yours. Those negatives are not upstairs."

"Not upstairs?" echoed the elder Gale, with a look of blank bewilderment. "Then where are they?"

His son laughed grimly. "I guess they're in the *Bulletin's* photo-engraving room at this moment, being made into cuts for to-morrow morning's paper. Melba has worked the same game on us that that kid worked on Carroll."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FROM GLOOM TO JOY.

"Excuse me, Mr. Carroll, but there's a lady outside who wants to see you."

The proprietor of the *Bulletin* frowned at the reporter who made this announcement. The latter's desk was situated near the door of the editorial room, and therefore it had fallen to his lot to respond to the fair visitor's timid knock upon that portal.

"A lady!" muttered Carroll peevishly. "Who is she, and what does she want?" This was only a short time after his painful discovery of the loss of those precious negatives, and he was not feeling at all in the mood to receive visitors.

"She says that she wants to sell you some pictures, sir—some photographs," the reporter announced.

The frown upon Carroll's face deepened. "Tell her I don't want any," he said. Pictures were a very sore subject just then. "Tell her to come around some other day, when I'm not so busy."

The Camera Chap, who was seated at Carroll's elbow, smiled. "Why not see what she's got?" he suggested mildly. "Don't be a grouch, Fred. Maybe these pictures may be something we want—something that will be newsy enough for to-morrow's front page, to take the place of the missing ones."

Carroll shook his head. "Precious little chance of that," he grumbled. "I'll bet they're photographs of the latest Paris fashions, a new style of hair dressing, or some such rot. However, I suppose I'd better see her."

Two minutes later he was mighty glad that he had come to this determination. He jumped to his feet with an exclamation of astonishment as he caught sight of the girl advancing toward his desk.

"Melba!" he cried. "You here—in the *Bulletin* office! What on earth does this mean?"

The girl laughed. "Why, really, Fred, this isn't a very gracious reception. You actually seem more alarmed than glad to see me—doesn't he, Mr. Hawley?"

"I am tickled to death to see you, of course," declared Carroll soberly. "But at the same time I am completely staggered by your visit. This is the first time you have ever braved your uncle's wrath by venturing into the *Bulletin* office, so I can't help thinking that something serious must have happened."

"Not at all," was the smiling answer. "I am here merely on a matter of business. As I explained to the nice young man who greeted me at the door, I have come to try to sell you some photographs."

She opened her hand bag, and, taking therefrom some films, threw them upon the desk.

As Carroll picked them up, he uttered an exclamation of joyous amazement.

"Look here, Frank," he cried excitedly. "A miracle, if ever there was one! If these are not the negatives, I'll eat my hat."

The Camera Chap stared at the pictures.

"By Jove, so they are!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "This is too good to be true, Miss Gale. May I inquire how you got them, or is it a secret?"

Melba had no desire to make a secret of it, and, in as few words as possible, she explained the ruse she had employed.

Carroll and the Camera Chap chuckled with glee over her story, but suddenly the former grew grave.

"It is mighty fine of you to have done this thing for me, little girl," he said, "and I shall never forget it; but, of course, it is quite out of the question for us to use these pictures now."

"Why?" exclaimed Melba, in dismay. "What's the matter with them?"

"Because it would get you in bad with your uncle if we were to use them," said Carroll. "Do you suppose for a minute that I'm going to permit you to get into trouble for my sake?"

Melba shrugged her shoulders. "I suppose I'm going to get into trouble, anyway," she said. "Whether or not you publish the pictures won't make the slightest difference, Fred. My uncle has learned by this time of the deception I practiced on his photo-engraver, and, of course, he must realize why I sought to gain possession of those negatives. Naturally he and my cousins will be very angry, and I suppose there'll be a scene when they come home this evening." She laughed defiantly. "But I don't care. If they say anything to me I'll tell them plainly just what I think of their shameful conduct."

Carroll looked at her admiringly. In spite of her defiant attitude, he knew that she secretly dreaded the ordeal before her. Old Delancey Gale's anger never took the form of violence; it found vent in sneering, caustic sentences which, to a girl of Melba's sensitive nature, were much more painful than abuse. Carroll was aware, for she often confided the fact to him, how greatly she feared her uncle's venomous tongue.

"You're a brave little girl," he said tenderly. "But I'm awfully sorry that you've put yourself in bad on my account. But perhaps it isn't too late, even now."

"Not too late for what?" the girl inquired.

"You must take these pictures back to the *Chronicle* office right away," Carroll said firmly. "It is quite possible that your uncle and cousin have not as yet made the discovery that they are missing. If so, there is no reason why they should ever learn what you have done, Melba. I guess you can persuade the man in charge of the photo-engraving room to keep mum on the subject. Don't you think that'll be the best plan, Frank?"

"I certainly do," the Camera Chap agreed sadly. "Even though it means the loss of the pictures to the *Bulletin*." He turned smilingly to the girl. "I have no doubt, Miss Gale, that without telling a downright fib you can manage to give your uncle the impression that after taking the films you were seized with remorse, which caused you to bring them back again. That surely ought to appease him."

The girl frowned. "I shall do no such thing," she declared indignantly. "I should just like to see myself taking those pictures back to the *Chronicle* office. They stole them from you, and I was justified in recovering them for you in the way I did."

"But you must take them back, Melba," Carroll insisted. "And, what's more, you must do it as quickly as possible. There isn't a minute to be lost. Now, don't be stubborn, little girl," he pleaded. "We are not going to use the pictures, so nothing whatever will be gained by your refusal to take them back; and you might just as well save yourself from unpleasantness at home."

"But you are going to use them!" Melba declared firmly. "I insist upon it, Fred. If I don't see them on the front page of to-morrow's *Bulletin*, I shall never speak to you again. And I mean that, too."

Realizing that she did mean it, Carroll turned helplessly to the Camera Chap. The latter came promptly to the rescue.

"It is quite evident that Miss Gale overestimates the importance of those snapshots," he said craftily. "Use them on the front page? That would be very bad judgment from a journalistic standpoint, I think. The news value of the pictures doesn't entitle them to such a prominent position."

"Certainly not," said Carroll, catching the cue instantly. "As Mr. Hawley says, Melba, you are laboring under a wrong impression. Those pictures aren't of any great importance. Whether we publish them or not really won't make very much difference to the *Bulletin*. So you see, Melba, you'll only be embarrassing us by insisting that we use them. Now that you know the real state of affairs, won't you take them back like a good girl?"

"No, I won't!" replied Melba. She laughed merrily. "You boys must be very simple if you imagine that I am to be deceived so easily. In spite of what you say, I know that those pictures were intended to be the star feature of to-morrow's issue."

"Not at all," Carroll protested, feeling that the circumstances warranted him in "lying like a gentleman."

The girl laughed again. "Don't you suppose I saw how hugely delighted you both were when you first picked up those films and recognized them as the stolen ones? It was only after Fred suddenly realized that my act might get me into trouble at home that you both made any attempt to hide your great joy at getting them back again. Besides which, my common sense tells me that my uncle and cousin wouldn't have gone to so much trouble to get hold of them if they hadn't known that they were of great value. No, Fred; it is very manly and generous of you to want to make this sacrifice, but I am not going to let you do it. I insist upon your using these pictures. If I don't see them in to-morrow morning's paper—well, I've told you what the consequences will be."

After some further argument, the two men saw that it was quite useless to attempt to alter her decision, and Carroll very reluctantly promised her that the snapshots would be used.

"And now," said Melba, highly elated over her victory, "let me tell you the price of these films. You know I told you that I had come to sell them to you—not to give them. I sincerely hope that you won't haggle over the terms, Mr. Editor."

"Well, that all depends," Carroll replied laughingly. "If you set too high a price on them, I am afraid we shall have to turn you down. I don't mind admitting to you that the *Bulletin's* treasury is in none too flourishing a condition just now. We are obliged to turn over every cent before we decide to spend it."

"I don't want anything out of the *Bulletin's* treasury," the girl said. "The price of these pictures, Fred, is the forgiveness and reinstatement of Miggsy."

Carroll's face grew grim. "Nothing doing," he said firmly. "I've no use for traitors. What that young scamp did shows that he is thoroughly vicious. You can't reasonably expect me to take him back, Melba."

"But he is only a child, Fred," the girl pleaded. "And just think how strongly he was tempted. He is thoroughly

penitent now. I am quite sure he would never make a mistake like that again."

She turned appealingly to the Camera Chap. Her intuition told her that she would find an ally in that generous, broad-minded young man. "Don't you think that poor Miggsy ought to be given another chance, Mr. Hawley?" she said.

"Indeed I do," was the prompt reply. "See here, Fred, as Miss Gale says, Miggsy is only a kid. Even a full-grown man might have found it difficult to resist the inducements that those fellows probably offered. Let's not be too hard on the youngster. He's been punished quite enough, I think. The crooked deal he got from the *Chronicle* was a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

"Besides," said Melba, "don't forget, Fred, that we owe the recovery of these negatives entirely to him. If Miggsy hadn't worked that clever ruse on your photo-engraver, I shouldn't have had the least idea how to get the pictures out of the hands of the *Chronicle's* photo-engraver. I merely copied his plan. You ought to take that into account."

The childlike argument caused Carroll's face to relax into a smile. "A woman's logic is certainly a wonderful thing," he chuckled. "It seems to me that if the boy hadn't worked that trick in the first place, there wouldn't have been any occasion for you to copy it at all. However, since you are both against me, I suppose I have got to give in. Miggsy shall have another chance. I'll send somebody out to find him and bring him back."

The Camera Chap, happening to glance out of the window at that moment, saw something which brought a broad grin to his face.

"I guess you won't have to search far for him," he announced. "Unless my eyes greatly deceive me, he is standing on the other side of the street at this very minute, gazing wistfully up at these windows, like a little fox terrier who has been turned out of the house. Take a peep at him, Fred. If the expression of abject misery on that young countenance wouldn't melt the hardest heart, I don't know what would."

Carroll stepped to the window, and, catching Miggsy's eye, beckoned to him to come up.

Mistrust of his ex-employer's intentions would have caused the boy to ignore this summons and take to his heels in panic, if Melba had not come to the window, and, standing beside Carroll, smiled down encouragingly to him.

The sight of his fair champion reassured Miggsy. His heart beating wildly, he crossed the street, entered the Bulletin Building, and came very sheepishly into the presence of the man whom he had wronged.

"Mr. Carroll," he began stammeringly, "I—I don't know how——"

"That's all right, Miggsy," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* interrupted gruffly. "Never mind trying to explain. Just forget all about this unfortunate incident, and get back to your work. For the rest of the day, Miggsy," he added, "I want you to stand on guard out in the hall, and watch very closely whoever goes upstairs to the photo-engraving room. If Neilson has any visitors, notify me promptly."

Hawley grinned as he listened to these instructions. "You seem to expect callers, Fred," he remarked dryly.

"Well, I think it quite likely that we shall get some," Carroll replied.

CHAPTER XXV.

BEFORE PRESS TIME.

Young Mr. Gale, with an exceedingly peevish expression upon his handsome countenance, dropped into police headquarters with the intention of having a little talk with his friend, Chief Hodgins.

He was greatly disappointed when the patrolman on guard at the head of the stairway told him that the chief was not in.

"He's taking a day off," the man explained. "He's gone out of town, I believe; but we expect him back tomorrow morning. Can't your business wait until then?"

"Hardly," Gale replied. "The matter I wished to see him about requires immediate attention. Who's in charge while he's away?"

"Captain Callman. Would you like to see him? He's in the chief's office now."

The captain greeted his visitor cordially when he heard that the latter was the son of the proprietor of the administration organ. *Chronicle* men were as welcome at police headquarters as *Bulletin* men were obnoxious.

The captain listened with great interest to what Gale told him, and a troubled expression came to his face.

"Do you know whose pictures they've got?" he inquired uneasily.

"I know a couple of them. There were six altogether, but I haven't the slightest idea who the other four were. It was quite impossible to recognize the faces in the negatives."

"Well, even if you couldn't recognize the faces, it seems to me that you ought to have been able to distinguish the uniforms," said Callman anxiously. "Didn't happen to notice whether one of 'em was wearing a captain's uniform, did you, young man?"

"Why, yes," said Gale. "There was a captain among them. It was a very clear snapshot—the best of the lot. It was taken on Main Street—I could tell that by the buildings in the background. But I don't know which captain it was. As I have said, it wasn't possible to distinguish the faces on the films."

"I think I know who it was, all right," growled Callman. "I've got an idea that it was me. I've a hazy recollection that somebody took a flash-light picture of me on Main Street last night."

"A hazy recollection?" Gale echoed, with an inquiring inflection.

The captain nodded gloomily. "Yes; I don't remember much about it, but I've got a faint idea that the thing happened. You see, some of my friends gave me a little dinner as a token of their esteem last night, and—well, there must have been something wrong with the lobster salad, I guess. I had a fierce attack of—er—ptomaine poisoning, and when I left the festive board to go on duty I was pretty wabbly on my legs, and my head wasn't very clear; but I've got just a dim recollection of a fellow standing in front of me with a camera, and of a flash light going off. I had clean forgotten all about it, but what you have told me has brought it back to me."

"Gee!" exclaimed Gale sympathetically. "So one of those snapshots is of you, eh? That's too bad, captain. But what are you going to do about it? Surely you don't intend to let those stiffs publish your picture?"

Callman scowled. "Not if I can help it. But how can I stop 'em?"

"Well, if I were in your place I shouldn't hesitate at anything," said Gale. "If necessary, I'd march a squad of cops into the *Bulletin* office, and seize those films and the cuts made from them."

Callman considered this suggestion for a few moments, then shook his head. "No, I don't like that very much. It would be too high-handed a proceedin'. If it wasn't a newspaper that we had to deal with, I might try it; but it's dangerous to monkey with the liberty of the press. That's one thing the people won't stand for."

"But those snapshots were taken in violation of the law —the new anticamera law," argued Gale. "Surely that gives you the legal right to confiscate them."

"No, it don't," said Callman regretfully. "I was talkin' with the district attorney about that the other day, and he told me that while we can arrest a newspaper photographer for taking pictures without a license, we can't stop the newspaper from publishing the pictures.

"Besides," he added, "if I did as you suggest, it would probably get the mayor sore. He's a little leery about this new camera law."

Gale was somewhat discouraged, but suddenly he brightened up. "Well, here's another suggestion, captain," he said. "Why not try what bribery will do? The *Bulletin's* photo-engraving plant is run by a fellow named Neilson. What's the matter with sending somebody to see him, and offer him a good price to hand over the negatives and destroy the cuts?"

Callman nodded approvingly. "That sounds much better. But are you sure that the man can be bribed?"

"Pshaw! Every man has his price," was the cynical reply. "And I don't suppose this Neilson hates money more than most of us."

"I'm not sure that it would work," said Callman, "but it's worth tryin'. How would you suggest goin' about it? It's a little dangerous, of course, but I'm willing to take a chance."

"I don't think there'd be the slightest danger, captain," said Gale. "I've got a plan by which it could be worked with perfect safety."

He proceeded to explain this plan to the acting head of Oldham's police force, and that official thought very well of it, and decided to put it into effect immediately.

An hour later, a large, red-faced man named Rudolph Meyer, who kept a delicatessen store not far from police headquarters, and who was under certain obligations to Police Captain Callman, entered the Bulletin Building, and ascended the stairway leading to the photo-engraving plant.

At the top of the first flight he was intercepted by Miggsy. "Hey! Where d'yer suppose you're going, mister?" the boy demanded.

"I want to go by der place where der cuts iss made," Mr. Meyer explained. "I haff a little order for some advertising cuts which I wish to give."

"Oh, some job work, eh?" said Miggsy. "All right; I'll show you the way up to the plant."

"You needn't trouble, my boy," said Mr. Meyer hastily. "I find it all right by meinself."

"Oh, it's no trouble at all, mister," declared Miggsy, with a grin. "This way, please."

Mr. Meyer did not appear to be tickled to death by this attention, but he followed the boy up the stairs without making any further protest.

Neilson was working on the police cuts when they entered the room. He looked up suspiciously at his visitors. Carroll had warned him to be strictly on his guard while the snapshots were in his possession.

"Here's a gent who wants to do some business with you, Mr. Neilson," Miggsy announced. And then, greatly to Meyer's relief, the boy went downstairs, leaving him alone with the photo-engraver.

The visitor lost no time in getting down to business. There was no telling when the boy or somebody else might come into the room, and Mr. Meyer was exceedingly averse to saying what he had to say to Neilson in the presence of a third party. At no time in his life had he felt more inclined to indorse the old saying that "two is company, three is a crowd," than at this minute.

"I want some cuts made," he began. "I am getting out a leedle advertising circular for my wine and liquor business. Here iss one of the pictures which I wish made into a cut."

He drew a small oblong of saffron-hued paper from his pocket, and held it before Neilson's eyes.

"Why, that ban a fifty-dollar bill," exclaimed Neilson in astonishment.

Mr. Meyer took from his pocket another slip of paper. "And here, mein friend, is another leedle picture which I wish made into a cut," he announced.

The engraver's eyes opened wider. "That ban a hundred-dollar bill!" he exclaimed.

"Nefer mind what they are, mein friend," said Meyer. "I want them both made into cuts for mein leedle advertising circular. You can do it—yes?"

"Sure," Neilson replied. "Why not? When must the cuts be ready?"

"Oh, there's no hurry. Keep these leedle pictures for as long as you like." Mr. Meyer put his head closer to the engraver's, and lowered his voice. "In fact, mein friend, you can keep them forever—if you will do me a leedle favor."

Neilson's eyes glistened hungrily. "What's the favor?" he demanded eagerly. "I ban willing to do whole lot of favors for a hundred and fifty dollars."

In a tense whisper, Mr. Meyer explained how the money was to be earned. The *Bulletin's* photo-engraver did not appear to be horrified or indignant.

"Oll right," he said phlegmatically; "I do it. I ban sick of this here yob, anyway. Give me the hundred and fifty dollars. It ban look good to me."

He held out his hand, and, as the yellowbacks came in contact with his long, slim fingers, his ears caught a faint, clicking sound, which came from a large canvas screen at the other end of the room.

Then there was a chuckle, and a voice cried exultantly: "All right, Ole; we've got it!"

Mr. Meyer glanced uneasily toward the screen. From behind that piece of furniture stepped two young men. One of them had a camera in his hand.

"What'll I do with this here dirty money, Mr. Carroll?" inquired Neilson, his usually stolid countenance animated by a broad grin.

"Give it back to the gentleman, Ole," Carroll chuckled. "He may need it to buy *Bulletins* with to-morrow morning. I've no doubt he'll want a whole lot of copies, inasmuch as his portrait is going to occupy such a prominent position in the paper."

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Raw Cotton in Many Colors.

In South Carolina there is a cotton grower, W. Brabham, who maintains that cotton may be colored before it is grown. He says: "I have now in prospect or on hand red, brown, green, and gray cotton." Some he got by means of hybridizing. Red is native to Peru, gray is grown in India, brown in Egypt, yellow in China, and black is being developed in Mexico, according to Mr. Brabham.

He says soil has no effect on the colors, and he believes that it will be possible to grow practically any desired shade as a result of crossing the various available colors. Thus, if the war makes it impossible to obtain dyes, we may be able to get along with the aid of nature and have the additional certainty that the colors will be fast.

Tree is Foe of Mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes had better give Pennsylvania a wide berth in the future, if Professor Henry G. Walters' eucalyptus trees begin to flourish. Recently the professor planted 500 seeds of this tree, which is a native of Australia, at his plant-research institute at Langhorne, Bucks County, Pa. He says they keep away mosquitoes and miasma.

Professor Walters is not certain that he can induce the trees to stand the Pennsylvania climate, but he's going to try. Unless they are treated chemically, they succumb usually to a temperature below twenty-seven degrees. When they grow properly they attain a height of 375 to 480 feet.

They have other values in addition to being mosquito exterminators. The oil has a fragrant perfume. From the eucalyptus rostrata, or red gum, Professor Walters says, a delicious beverage is obtained by steeping the blossoms in water.

The tree species planted at Langhorne recently are the amygdalina, or peppermint gum; the rostrata, or red gum, and gloubulus, or Tasmanian blue gum.

Saw Seven Distinct Suns.

Seven distinct suns, or solar reflections, were seen by Mr. and Mrs. R. M. King, of Oak Mills, Kan., and, as near as they can recall, the strange phenomenon occurred in March, 1855. Mrs. King is making inquiry through the press to know if any of the old-timers remember it.

The strange spectacle was first noticed at eight o'clock in the morning and lasted until noon. They were in a group, each sun having a circle around it, and wherever these circles intersected there appeared to be a small star. The phenomenon caused considerable consternation among superstitious people, some contending that it was an omen of an impending war or that the end of the world was near.

Aime Argand and the Lamp.

A lamp of some character has been used since a period so remote that no trace of its origin is to be found, but the lamp, as we understand it, was the invention of Aime Argand, a Frenchman, and he came about the effectiveness of this lighting apparatus in a most unique way.

Argand never fairly lifted himself out of the rut of poverty, but lived and died poor, disappointed and neglected. He was born at Geneva, Switzerland, in 1755, but he was living in England in 1782, when his first lamp was produced. The main feature of his lamp was that the wick fitted into a hollow cylinder, up which a current of air was allowed to pass, admitting a free supply of oxygen to the interior as well as the exterior of the circular flame.

Interesting New Inventions.

To keep telephones clean a San Francisco inventor has patented a machine that automatically covers a transmitter with paper after it has been used, which paper must be removed before the instrument is used again.

A newly invented electrical device measures off the ten-millionth part of a second with accuracy.

A space-saving household novelty is a folding washtub, which is locked against collapsing when filled with water.

A coat and hatrack combined with a fire escape is a new and useful piece of household furniture.

So that automobiles can be run on railroad tracks, flanged steel rims have been invented that are attached by deflating the tires and then inflating them until they grip the rims.

Two Wisconsin inventors have patented a kerosene lamp that is automatically extinguished if upset or even lifted from a support.

A California genius has rigged up a motor cycle with battery and motor, so that he dispenses with the use of gasoline.

Cows Travel Far to Mourn.

Employees at the cattle pens at Paoli freight station, in Philadelphia, Pa., were puzzled the other day when they found two stray cows near the pens when they reported for work. The cows were lowing and wouldn't be driven away.

When F. H. Bernheisel, a cattle dealer of Newtown Square, arrived, he said that the cows were the mothers of two calves found trampled dead when a car containing a herd consigned to him was unloaded at Paoli. The calves were buried soon after the unloading, and Bernheisel's employees drove the herd to his farm.

The two mother cows got away from the pasture during the night and made the seven-mile journey to their "babies" at Paoli in darkness

Now Numbers His Children.

If any person in Pendleton County, Ky., needs a fourteen-passenger motor car, it must be County Assessor John McClanahan. Well, he actually tried to get his family all in a buggy recently and go to McKinneysburg visiting. Everybody mistook them for a Sunday-school picnic party and never knew any better until they were told that John McClanahan was taking a section of the Christian Church congregation of McKinneysburg to spend the day with relatives. Several tried to count them, but made no headway, as one little fellow kept moving about

so they could not count him. Some made a good guess, and that was to the effect that he had a buggy load.

John has run out of names and gone to numbering them. He has passed out of the teens, but we don't know where he started nor do we know or even attempt to guess where he will stop.

To Make Compass on Watch.

A watch may be used to determine the points of the compass by pointing the hour hand at the sun any time of the day and then placing a small piece of straight wire crosswise between the hour hand and the figure twelve, getting exactly halfway. The point of the wire which comes between the twelve and the hour hand always points due south.

Shoots White Jack Rabbit.

A snow-white jack rabbit, shot in the big grazing district at Bazaar, Kan., by Robert Carr, was a curiosity brought to Cottonwood Falls by George Martin. According to old residents here, such a thing as a white jack rabbit has never before been heard of. Carr, who shot the animal, said it made a shining target against the green grass of the range, and he would have been glad to have captured it alive.

Robbed by an Automobile.

A freak automobile accident here robbed J. L. Moore, seventy-five years old, of his watch and Masonic charm. Mr. Moore was one of the thousands of visitors attending the "fruit fair" at Salem, Ore. As he crossed the street, an automobile brushed against him. He was knocked down. The machine kept going, and with it was part of Mr. Moore's waistcoat, containing his watch and Masonic charm.

Look Out! Meteors Falling.

Jacob Weggen, of Muscatine, Iowa, narrowly escaped death from the skies when a nine-pound fragment of meteorite, which exploded above him embedded itself in the earth, within eight feet from him as he stood bewildered by the phenomena.

Weggen was crossing the lawn when he observed a bright light in the skies. He witnessed the approach of the aërolite and its explosion.

Bird Excites Missourians.

A strange bird that has been making its appearance on the Yeager farm, three miles southwest of Gentry, Mo., is causing considerable comment among the people of the vicinity. People who have seen the bird at close range say it in no way resembles a parrot, but it calls as plainly as a person could speak the words: "William Stevens—William Stevens."

There is no person living in the neighborhood by that name, and the bird's insistent call is causing people to wonder. Efforts are being made to capture the bird alive, but it is very wild, and so far has succeeded in eluding capture.

Willy Gets Spanked—Bang!

Mrs. William Brown, of Jamison City, Pa., felt badly about spanking her son, William, junior, but it had to be done. Now she is deeply grieved, because her boy is suffering pain from burns received as a result of the spanking.

Junior found a box of toy-pistol caps left over from the Fourth and carried them in his trousers pocket. When he went swimming and didn't come home until an hour after supper time, Mrs. Brown turned him over her knee and began to administer the corrective treatment.

As a result of an unusually hard contact of the slipper the caps exploded all at once.

Picking Prickly Peppers.

Samuel Pocket's pockets are not pickpocket proof, but to Sam it's no laughing matter. While he was boarding a street car Saturday in Saginaw, Mich., on his way to a picnic, some one slipped his hand into one of Sam's pistol pockets and fled with a pocketbook containing $180. When Pocket put his own hand in his own pocket, he found the pocketbook, pelf, and picnic pass were gone, and his discovery was positive and painful.

Old "Nipsic" Goes Up in Smoke.

The touch of a match and all that was left of the gallant old battleship *Nipsic*, which helped make naval history for nearly fifty years, was consigned to flames on Lumi Island on Bellingham Bay, Wash.

Two incidents stand out above all the rest in the palmy days of the *Nipsic*. She was of Admiral Farragut's fleet at Mobile and she was the only American vessel to come out whole in the typhoon at Aphia, Samoa, in 1889.

Old Lady, Seventy-nine, is Some Rider.

With the mercury at one hundred degrees, Mrs. Cynthia E. Davis, of Goshen, Ind., celebrated her seventy-ninth birthday anniversary by riding a bicycle to New Paris and return, a distance of twelve miles. Again at home she said to two nephews and a pair of slender gazelles who may have some right to be called second or third cousins: "Come on, chickens, I'll scramble yc a few aigs."

Loud Siren Screecher Terroizes Hundreds.

"Bob" Maynard is known to be one of the best logging engineers in Chireno, Texas, but he doesn't like to run a wheezy, prancing old steam hurdy-gurdy. Not at all; give Bob a likely hummer and he is the chap that will keep her humming. Thus it was that he no sooner had engaged with a logging outfit than he demanded and got a brand-new engine. The whistle on the new power producer was too much like a boy's penny trumpet to suit the fastidious Bob. Bob had had some experience along the Mississippi and had heard the noisy whistles that adorn some of the big flat-bottom boats. And in due time there arrived from the big shop up north a siren screecher warranted to be heard ten miles, in either direction, on a still day.

Everything adjusted to Bob's practical taste, he proceeded to run the new beauty over to where it was to do duty at a busy lumber camp. Arrived in that vicinity at about the same time was a full-fledged Sunday school out for a picnic in the woods. When Bob let loose with the great siren screecher—now low and mournful—then wild and alarming—and again to its limit, as if some eighty-foot, hundred-ton dinosaurus had suddenly come to life and was setting up an unearthy howl for its mate, Bob's heart fluttered with delight.

Hearing the awful sounds, four of the Sunday-school girls rushed back to the grove where half a hundred children and adults stood spellbound, and cried out: "Wolves—panthers—bears—monsters—save us! save us!"

After long consultation, half a dozen men, with guns and dogs, started out to scour the country for the "roaring hyenus," as one of the men called it.

By this time scores of people came rushing pell-mell from a near-by settlement, armed with shotguns, rifles, axes, pitchforks, and fence stakes. "Whatever is it?" they shouted, and "What is to become of us?" from many of the women formed into groups with their young ones shielded behind their barriers of skirts.

"Go, men, and slay that awful beast before we are all devoured like the martyrs of yore," yelled one tall, wild-eyed matron, pointing a long, bony finger in the direction of the terrifying sounds, which again broke forth, with even greater fury.

Soon there was a crashing of underbrush, wild cries of excited men, barking and howling of numerous hounds, occasional shots, as the attackers advanced toward the spot from which the alarming sounds came.

Now hundreds of telephones were in use throughout the country. "What is it?" one would ask. "What is what?" comes the reply. "That awful noise we hear," another would explain. "Cyclone, I guess," still another would answer.

In time the attacking force came to the clearing where Bob was amusing himself with the try-out of his screeching pet. The attackers and their dogs, the former seeing that the enemy was nothing worse than a man of average height and weight and some sort of hissing locomotive, made a football rush, and, as they came to a halt, all exclaimed as one man:

"Well, what the h—l!"

"Jest tunin' her up," said Bob, with a characteristic grin.

"Tunin' her up!" angrily exclaimed one of the Sunday-school scouts. "Don't ye know yer tunin' up the whole county with that thar crazy whangdoodle affair? Want ter skeer people ter death?"

"Oh," said Bob calmly, "they'll like it in time—it's more fun than a cage o' monkeys."

"Jes' so, I don't think," said the angry man. "And I'll tell you what, mister, ef thet thingumbob scares any of them wimmen and children to death, we'll bring heavy damage suits against the company, that's what we'll do."

"You can't blow that thing around these diggings any more," said the superintendent of the Sunday school.

"Now, see here," said Bob, "you go fetch all the women and little ones over here to the camp and let me demonstrate to them, and if this here whistle isn't the one big, entertaining feature of your picnic, I'll promise never to blow her again."

This was finally agreed upon, and, true to Bob's claim, the whole crowd found the noisy siren to be "more fun than a cage of monkeys."

Before breaking up at nightfall the picknickers declared Bob was the hero of the day, and tendered him a vote of thanks.

Even so, the big laugh was reserved to the last. Just as Bob was banking his fire and the crowd were shouting and waving their good-bys and good nights, the faces of three wild-eyed Indians loomed up from behind a clump of sagebrush and continued to stare with what might be called frozen amazement. When finally induced to speak, one of them said, with a smile, "Injin heap fool. Come much far. All day climb tree when hear noise. No can tell what. Injin heap fool. Odder Injin now much laugh."

Finds Some Use for Dogfish.

Dogfish are so numerous in Long Island waters that they are cluttering up the fishermen's lines. No use had been found for them until Roger Carman, of Freeport, N. Y., cut the two little horns off one of the fish and used them for needles on his phonograph.

Carman says these dogfish horns reproduce the records perfectly, without any grating noise, and that there does not seem to be any wear out to them. Contrary to expectations, there was no barking sound, no more than there would be mewing if catfish horns were used.

All the fishermen hereabouts are now saving the two little horns on each dogfish, with the expectation that there will be a big demand for them by phonograph users.

Look Out for Towel Inside.

Doctor Edgar Todd, of Toms River, N. J., is feeling better and his "unaccountable illness" has at last been explained. Doctor Todd was operated on last December for kidney trouble, but failed to improve. Recently he was operated on again and a surgeon's towel, ten inches in diameter, was removed from his body.

Man and Wife Keep Up Mum Game Fifty Years.

Fifty-two years married and fifty years gone by without speaking to each other.

This is the remarkable record of a South Westport, Mass., couple, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wing. Outside of their neighbors, who have known of the estrangement for years, but have carefully refrained from mentioning it, the unique conversational separation of the old people did not become known to the world at large until their home was destroyed by fire.

Few people know the cause of the gulf between the two, and they treasure their secret. It began shortly after their marriage, half a century ago. Both have endured the situation and both apparently have lived happy, contented, and useful lives. Their only conversation during that long span of time has been carried on through the medium of a third person.

Mr. Wing is a farmer, eighty-eight years old, while his wife is sixty-nine. Until their farmhouse burned down, Mrs. Wing lived in the house, while Mr. Wing lived in a sort of shanty which he styled his "den." He has been living in the den since, and Mrs. Wing has gone to live with her son, whose residence is a short distance away.

Snakes and Snake Oil While Customers Wait.

About nine miles from Neosho, Mo., Adelbert Tibbins and J. J. Wilson are operating one of the most unique "farms" in the country. This is nothing less than a "rattlesnake ranch," and this enterprise, which is conducted on Indian Creek, being in a neighborhood where snakes are plentiful, the two men are doing a thriving business. They say that there seems to be an unusually large number of reptiles in this part of the Ozarks this summer.

For three years the two men have been building up

this business, and now have in the neighborhood of 600 snakes in their pits, which are so constructed that the reptiles cannot escape. The principal profits of this enterprise come from the extracting of poison from the rattlesnakes, which is sold at high prices to doctors, chemists, and others. Physicians use this poison, after it has been prepared in a scientific manner, for the treatment of epilepsy and other diseases.

Tibbins and Wilson also have a large revenue from the sale of live reptiles to traveling shows and to museums, at the established rate of twenty-five cents per pound. A large, fat serpent usually brings several dollars. The smaller, poorer specimens are killed and their flesh converted into rattlesnake oil, which has a steady sale at one dollar an ounce. This oil is said to be a specific for the treatment of rheumatism.

Most of the capturing of rattlesnakes for the "ranch" is done by the two partners themselves. Seldom can they find a white man who will take a chance on the rather dangerous duty, though occasionally an Indian or negro is found who is willing, for a good price, to run the risk of taking them alive. It is said that the best time for the hunting of rattlesnakes is in the early spring, when they first come out of their winter's sleep and are still sluggish. They are caught by means of a forked stick, with which their heads are pinned to the earth and the captor can pick them up and place them in a sack.

When they intend to sell a live snake by weight it is fattened on rabbits or rats. They take on weight rapidly. Tibbins and Wilson have found as many as one hundred snakes in one cave. The same family of reptiles will occupy a cave for years if left undisturbed, the two men say.

Sportsmen Rescue Squirrel.

Joining forces, five trout fishermen in Orangeville, Minn., saved the life of a red squirrel which was on the point of being crushed by a huge blacksnake.

Hearing shrieks of terror, which none of the men had ever before heard, the men dropped their poles and rushed into the bushes, where they found a squirrel struggling to free itself from the coils of a big blacksnake, which was slowly winding itself around the little animal.

The snake was hacked into pieces in an instant, and the squirrel scampered up a tree, where he sat and chattered at his rescuers, who declare they are sure the animal was thanking them.

Ever-bearing Cherry Tree.

An ever-bearing cherry tree is th valuable possession of Mrs. Oliver Slimmer, of Russell, Kan. The freak tree has an abundance of ripe fruit on it, has green fruit, and is still blossoming. From present prospects the tree will bear cherries well into the fall.

Scarlet Diving Girl Author of New Fad.

Frog parties are likely to become popular with bathers at other inland water resorts when the experience of a girl, clad in a bright-red bathing suit, becomes generally known.

The girl in scarlet was bathing in shallow water at Highland Lake, near Winsted, Conn., when she felt frogs strike her repeatedly. Being a great lover of that delectable dish—frog legs—the girl turned her experience to good account.

She repaired to a cottage, sewed about fifty fishhooks in the bright-red bathing suit, and then reëntered the lake. When she emerged from the water, nearly every hook held a bullfrog.

Hears the Dog Bark; Yes, Dogs Have Eyes.

The mystery of the Blue Island ax murders of July, 1914, has solved itself. To escape the tortures of his own conscience, Casimir Areiszewski, the murderer, gave himself up to the police of Buffalo, N. Y., and wrote and signed a confession.

It was for the little hoard which he knew to be hidden in Jacob Mislich's bedtick, said Areiszewski, that he killed Mislich, his wife, his daughter, and his granddaughter. But the crime did not yield even the sordid reward for which it was committed. Just as Areiszewski had cleared his way to the money, a dog barked—and ever since, he says, he has been unable to sleep without hearing and being awakened by a dream dog's barking.

"I was born in Russia and am a brickmaker by trade," ran Areiszewski's statement. "I came to this country when I was fourteen, and worked in Chicago for a year or two. Then I got a job in a brickyard in Blue Island, and rented a room from Mislich.

"A couple of years later I went West. When I came back to Blue Island, I got my old job and my old room. I knew old Mislich had money hidden in his bedtick. I got up early in the morning of July 5th and crept downstairs. I found an ax out in the shed and carried it back to the house. I was in my stocking feet, and they did not hear me coming. I killed them as they slept.

"It was as I killed the last—the granddaughter—that the watchdog barked, I was afraid to stay any longer, and I went away without the money. I have heard the dog barking ever since. When I try to sleep he wakes me. I have traveled all over the country, but the dog is still with me."

Makes Lucky Strike in Zinc.

Six months ago, George A. Tibbans, of Carterville, Mo., was "powder monkey" or shot firer at the old "Hero" zinc mine, at a wage of $3.50 per day. By the time he paid rent, household expenses, car fare, et cetera, he was in no danger of being forced to pay an income tax.

Believing he could do better for himself and family by working for himself, he secured a lease on the "Last Chance," an old, abandoned mine that had never paid on account of the low price of ore. For several weeks he barely made wages, but as the price of ore gradually went higher, he began to receive weekly checks of forty and fifty dollars. Then he discovered a "pocket" of exceedingly rich ore, and right on top of this zinc ore jumped to $130 per ton.

Tibbans has leased a 100-ton mill and is now cleaning up something over $1,000 a week, with a good chance of doing even better, for the "pocket" is becoming richer, and zinc ore seems to be due for still higher prices.

Big Brewery Becomes Malted-milk Concern.

Coors Brewery, at Golden, Col., one of the largest in the State, will discontinue the manufacture of beer and will employ the same force of men in the manufacture of malted milk. The plant represents an investment of a million dollars.

The Nick Carter Stories

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY — BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS

When it comes to detective stories worth while, the **Nick Carter Stories** contain the only ones that should be considered. They are not overdrawn tales of bloodshed. They rather show the working of one of the finest minds ever conceived by a writer. The name of Nick Carter is familiar all over the world, for the stories of his adventures may be read in twenty languages. No other stories have withstood the severe test of time so well as those contained in the **Nick Carter Stories.** It proves conclusively that they are the best. We give herewith a list of some of the back numbers in print. You can have your news dealer order them, or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage stamps.

730—The Torn Card.
731—Under Desperation's Spur.
732—The Connecting Link.
733—The Abduction Syndicate.
738—A Plot Within a Plot.
739—The Dead Accomplice.
746—The Secret Entrance.
747—The Career Mystery.
748—The Disappearing Fortune.
749—A Voice from the Past.
752—The Spider's Web.
753—The Man With a Crutch.
754—The Rajah's Regalia.
755—Saved from Death.
756—The Man Inside.
757—Out for Vengeance.
758—The Poisons of Exile.
759—The Antique Vial.
760—The House of Slumber.
761—A Double Identity.
762—"The Mocker's" Stratagem.
763—The Man that Came Back.
764—The Tracks in the Snow.
765—The Babbington Case.
766—The Masters of Millions.
767—The Blue Stain.
768—The Lost Clew.
770—The Turn of a Card.
771—A Message in the Dust.
772—A Royal Flush.
774—The Great Buddha Beryl.
775—The Vanishing Heiress.
776—The Unfinished Letter.
777—A Difficult Trail.
782—A Woman's Stratagem.
783—The Cliff Castle Affair.
784—A Prisoner in the Tomb.
785—A Resourceful Foe.
789—The Great Horde Tragedies.
795—Zanoni, the Transfigured.
796—The Lure of Gold.
797—The Man With a Chest.
798—A Shadowed Life.
799—The Secret Agent.
800—A Plot for a Crown.
801—The Diamond Button.
802—Up Against It.
803—The Gold Certificate.
804—Jack Wise Hurry Call.
805—Nick Carter's Ocean Chase.
807—Nick Carter's Advertisement.
808—The Kregoff Necklace.
811—Nick Carter and the Nihilists.
812—Nick Carter and the Convict Gang.
813—Nick Carter and the Guilty Governor.
814—The Trinagled Coin.
815—Ninety-nine—and One.
816—Coin Number 77.

14—The Silent Passenger.
15—Jack Dreen's Secret.
16—Nick Carter's Pipe Line Case.
17—Nick Carter and the Gold Thieves.
18—Nick Carter's Auto Chase.
19—The Corrigan Inheritance.
20—The Keen Eye of Denton.
21—The Spider's Parlor.
22—Nick Carter's Quick Guess.
23—Nick Carter and the Murderess.
24—Nick Carter and the Pay Car.
25—The Stolen Antique.
26—The Crook League.
27—An English Cracksman.
28—Nick Carter's Still Hunt.
29—Nick Carter's Electric Shock.
30—Nick Carter and the Stolen Duchess.
31—The Spirit Spot.
32—The Stolen Groom.
33—The Double Cross.
34—Nick Carter and Keno McCall.
35—Nick Carter's Death Trap.
36—Nick Carter's Simese Puzzle.
37—The Man Outside.
38—The Death Chamber.
39—The Wind and the Wire.
40—Nick Carter's Three Cornered Chase.
41—Dazaar, the Arch-Fiend.
42—The Mystery of the Seven.
43—Crossed Wires.
44—A Crimson Clew.
45—The Third Man.
46—The Sign of the Dagger.
47—The Devil Swindlers.
48—The Cross of Daggers.
49—At Risk of Life.
50—The Deeper Game.
51—The Code Message.
52—The Last of the Seven.
53—Ten-Ichl, the Wonderful.
54—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks.
55—The Golden Hair Clew.
56—Back From the Dead.
57—Through Dark Ways.
58—Wits Versus Trumps.
59—The Gambler's Last Hand.
60—The Murder of Linden Fells.
61—A Game for Millions.
62—Under Fire.
63—The Last Call.
64—Mercedes Dauton's Double.
65—The Millionaire's Nemesis.
66—A Princess of the Underworld.
67—The Crook's Blind.
68—The Fatal Hour.
69—Blood Money.
70—A Queen of Her Kind.
71—Isabel Benton's Trump Card.
72—A Princess of Hindes.
73—A Prince of Plotters.
74—The Crook's Double.
75—For Life and Honor.
76—A Compact With Dazaar.
77—In the Shadow of Dazaar.
78—The Crime of a Money King.
79—Birds of Prey.
80—The Unknown Dead.
81—The Secret Hand.
82—The Terrible Game of Millions.
83—A Dead Man's Power.
84—The Secrets of an Old House.
85—The Wolf Within.
86—The Stolen Lumpon.
87—In the Tolls.
88—The Stolen Radium.
89—A Crime in Paradise.

90—Behind Prison Bars.
91—The Blind Man's Daughter.
92—On the Brink of Ruin.
93—Letter of Fire.
94—The $100,000 Kiss.
95—Outlaws of the Militia.
96—The Opium-Runners.
97—In Record Time.
98—The Wag-Nok Clew.
99—The Middle Link.
100—The Crystal Maze.
101—A New Serpent in Eden.
102—The Amazon Succession.
103—A Dying Chance.
104—The Gargoul Girdle.
105—Twice in Jeopardy.
106—The Ghost Launch.
107—Up In the Air.
108—The Girl Prisoner.
109—The Red Plague.
110—The Arson Trust.
111—The King of the Firebugs.
112—Lifter's of the Lofts.
113—French Jimmie and His Forty Thieves.
114—The Death Plot.
115—The Evil Formula.
116—The Blue Button.
117—The Deadly Parallel.
118—The Vivisectionists.
119—The Stolen Brain.
120—An Uncanny Revenge.
121—The Call of Death.
122—The Substitute.
123—Half a Million Ransom.
124—The Girl Kidnaper.
125—The Pirate Yacht.
126—The Crime of the White Hand.
127—Found in the Jungle.
128—Six Men in a Loop.
129—The Jewels of Wat Chang.
130—The Crime in the Tower.
131—The Fatal Message.
132—Broken Ties.
133—Won by Magic.
134—The Secret of Shangore.
135—Straight to the Goal.
136—The Man They Held Back.
137—The Call of Opion.
138—The Traitors of the Tropics.
139—The Pressing Peril.
140—The Melting-Pot.
141—The Duplicate Night.
142—The Edge of a Crime.
143—The Sultan's Pearls.
144—The Clew of the White Collar.
145—An Unsolved Mystery.
146—Paying the Price.
147—On Death's Trail.
148—The Mark of Cain.
Dated July 17th, 1915.
149—A Network of Crime.
Dated July 24th, 1915.
150—The House of Fear.
Dated July 31st, 1915.
151—The Mystery of the Crossed Needles.
Dated August 7th, 1915.
152—The Powell Crime.
Dated August 14th, 1915.
153—The Doom of Sang Tu.
Dated August 21st, 1915.
154—The Mask of Death.
Dated August 28th, 1915.
155—The Gordon Elopement.
Dated Sept. 4th, 1915.
156—Blood Will Tell.

NEW SERIES

NICK CARTER STORIES

1—The Man from Nowhere.
2—The Face at the Window.
3—A Fight for a Million.
4—Nick Carter's Land Office.
5—Nick Carter and the Professor
6—Nick Carter as a Mill Hand.
7—A Single Clew.
8—The Emerald Snake.
9—The Currie Outfit.
10—Nick Carter and the Kidnaped Heiress.
11—Nick Carter Strikes Oil.
12—Nick Carter's Hunt for a Treasure.
13—A Mystery of the Highway.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY. If you want any back numbers of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your news dealer, they can be obtained direct from this office. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK CITY